



YUKON CHILD CARE BOARD
ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2020

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September 15, 2020

The Honourable Pauline Frost
Minister of Health and Social Services
Government of Yukon
P.O. Box 2703
Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 2C6

Dear Minister Frost,

As per section 4(11) of the Child Care Act, the Yukon Child Care Board is pleased to present our annual report to you, so that you may table it before the Legislative Assembly.

This report will again report on the last two years, but also a little on our current fiscal year to address the extraordinary times related to COVID. While we will obviously report more thoroughly on the impact of COVID in our annual report for 2020-21, we would be remiss not to speak to it at this time.

Thank you for your hard work as Minister and I hope you are pleased with our report. I am so grateful and proud for what our team has been able to accomplish in these last two years and we are thrilled to share our work with You, the Legislative Assembly, members of the child care industry, as well as all those affected by child care policies in Yukon.

Sincerely,



Amy Ryder
Chair, Yukon Child Care Board



A. Ryder

CONTENTS

02

Message from the
Chair

07

Progress on
Strategic Priorities:
Priority 1 & 2

14

Impact of COVID19

17

Looking Ahead

04

About the Child Care
Board

12

Progress on
Strategic Priorities:
Priority 3

16

Summary of
Financials

18

Meet the Board



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I often look to nature to metaphorically connect with human behavior and organization. One of my favorite natural wonders, and very suitable to fall in Yukon, is how birds flock together. Three main rules describe how flocking occurs. First, **Separation** is where individuals avoid bumping into their neighbors. For the Yukon Child Care Board (YCCB), this means that we have an amazing diversity of members who each bring an important and unique perspective. **Alignment** is where individuals all head in the same general direction as their neighbors. As a board, we are mandated by the Government of Yukon's (YG) *Child Care Act*, and we work to achieve our mandate through our business plan. Finally, there is **Cohesion**. Individuals stay closely connected with their most immediate neighbors. For me, this speaks to teamwork. I have a hard time imagining a more dedicated, caring, and effective team than what I have experienced with YCCB. It has been such a pleasure working with these exceptional people!

Two of our members, Erin Johnston and Davis McKay left the YCCB. Erin brought an incredible suite of governance skills as well as her perspective as a parent. Erin always had a lot to contribute and I greatly valued her time on the board. As a social worker, Davis was able to bring perspectives from more vulnerable members of our community to our conversations. He was great at challenging assumptions tactfully and assertively. He was a great asset to our team.

Despite YCCB's loss, we were fortunate to gain two new fantastic members. Paige Galette and Myke McPhee. These women have strong policy backgrounds and hit the ground running immediately. They have both taken so much initiative in their time here so far and I am so grateful for their contributions. Remaining on our board for another term, Jessica Dyck, Clayton Keats, Cyndi Desharnais, and Maggie Powter have many decades of experience between them in the child care industry. Each have remained consistently engaged in our work and actively on top of emerging issues.

We have kept busy on a variety of projects including some that we first raised in our annual report last time. We have continued to look at Yukon's Supported Child Care Worker program, pay strong attention to ensuring accessibility and understanding of the appeal process, and sit on an advisory panel for the development of a proposed curriculum framework for Yukon. And this year of course, COVID19 has challenged us to critically think about the role child care plays in our community, balance that with the health and safety of children, and remain adaptable in a constantly changing time.

I also want to highlight that having the Yukon Child Care Board is an enormous resource for child care operators, parents, and policy makers. I have seen the current government really grasp the importance of boards and councils in this last term. Our vacancies are filled quickly with bright and qualified individuals. Our board is very strong right now and this strength is an opportunity for government to lean on us as a resource. I would be so pleased to see YCCB being used, for example, to research or review policies, comment on broad changes, or simply for insight on a topic. It is my hope that the YCCB Chair and the Minister of HSS increase our one-on-one meetings to 2-3 times per year to enable frequent updates and ongoing dialogue.

I'm really happy with the work that our board has achieved in these last two years and I have no doubt that our positive momentum will continue.

Amy Ryder
Chair, Yukon Child Care Board

ABOUT THE YUKON CHILD CARE BOARD

MANDATE

Under section 4 of the Yukon *Child Care Act*, the Yukon Child Care Board (YCCB) is established with the following functions:

- to encourage the development and support of child care services which meet the needs of parents and children in the Yukon;
- to make recommendations to the Minister on any matter pertaining to child care;
- to review any policies, programs, services or administrative procedures of government departments in matters pertaining to child care;
- to advise on the planning, development, standards, co-ordination and evaluation of child care services in Yukon; and
- to hear appeals under this Act.

VISION

Yukon Child Care Board proactively supports the management of child care issues and decisions thereby yielding strength, innovation, and resiliency for the child care industry, its workers and all families affected by childcare policies and decisions.

MISSION

Maintain our board at full capacity with trained and knowledgeable members that are able to fulfill the board's responsibilities under the *Child Care Act* and effectively serve our stakeholders.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES AND GOALS 2018-2020

Knowledge and Governance

YCCB is focused on maintaining a full team of highly knowledgeable and effective members that are able to carry out its objectives under the *Child Care Act* with excellence. The YCCB will continue to improve clarity and reduce redundancy by reviewing and revising a number of outdated and overlapping board policies and procedures, as well as identifying issues and policy gaps that need attention.

- Continue to ensure board vacancies are filled in a timely manner.
- Ensure all board members are trained or receive refresher training in administrative law and the appeal process.
- Training for the Board's Executive Secretary in administrative law and appeal processes.
- Produce a 2-year business plan for 2020-22.
- Review, revise, and consolidate existing terms of reference documents.
- Complete the review, revision, and consolidation of existing procedures for addressing appeals under the Child Care Act.
- Identify policy gaps and develop new board policies as needed including, policies on media and conflict of interest.
- Review current costs of operations required to meet YCCB mandate and develop a recommended annual budget.
- Explore and research comparable financial models of other administrative boards or tribunals.

Issues Research and Recommendations

The Board will proactively identify issues and use the best available information to provide informed recommendations to the Minister of Health and Social Services.

- Continue to explore, understand and provide recommendations on Government of Yukon policies concerning the supported childcare worker program, support for appellants, and systemic struggles facing operators.

- Collect information on other current and pertinent issues related to child care as they arise.
- Use best available information to advise Child Care Services Unit and the Minister of Health and Social Services on programs policies and legislation.
- Continue to engage, advise and collaborate with Government of Yukon regarding federal funding related to the Multilateral Early Learning and Child Care Framework.
- Encourage and provide rationale for the modernization of the Yukon Child Care Act and regulations.

Outreach/Communication: To better understand the issues facing the child care industry, YCCB is focused on improving our understanding of our stakeholders and communicating the role we provide under the Act.

- Develop and launch a bilingual YCCB website.
- Establish a network for information sharing.
- Continue to engage HSS regarding recommendations on policies and programs.
- Increase our presence and visibility at public events and spaces.



PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC GOALS

PRIORITY 1: KNOWLEDGE AND GOVERNANCE

Our newest board members have yet to receive the training required to sit on an appeal panel. A decision by the Ombudsman in 2018 highlighted the need to always maintain a full board of trained members. In the event of an appeal, it benefits all parties if we have many qualified panel members to choose from. We are also creating capacity in Yukon in the form of knowledgeable board members.

Over the years the YCCB budget has slowly been getting smaller. Unfortunately, as the budget decreases, we are finding the need to increase our resources to meet the needs of changing times. We have developed a proposed budget for the upcoming year that we hope to discuss with Government of Yukon.

YCCB has been working on a Conflict of Interest policy that is nearly complete. This will provide better direction for board members, especially with respect to sitting on appeal hearing panels. We will likely look at a communications policy in the upcoming couple of years. Since our board has been fairly stable these last two years, we have focused largely on external policy topics.

PRIORITY 2: ISSUES RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We are continuing to look at the Supported Child Care Program. We raised this in our last report, and since then, we understand that an internal review has been completed. We kindly request a copy of the final report as we are quite interested in the findings. It is the hope of YCCB that we can discuss the review with government and work together to innovate and strengthen the program.

RECOMMENDATION: The Yukon Child Care Board recommends that a technical working group, including members from YCCB, YG, and from within the child care industry, be established to discuss the findings of the review and develop a plan to strengthen the program as necessary.

Also raised in the last report, was the issue of fair access to administrative justice. We suggested that appellants might feel disadvantaged because of a lack of familiarity with the process. Part of our role as a tribunal is to ensure that a fair and impartial process is provided to both parties. We began with completing a process flowchart to be used by anyone as a visual guide to a typical appeal process (pages 10-11). We also did some research and found a set of guidance documents in Alberta for appellants and the respondents. These documents inspired our new collection of Appeal process guidelines that are awaiting a final legal check before we can share them:

- A Guide to the Appeal Process - Yukon Child Care Act
- Preparing and Presenting Your Appeal - Appellants
- Preparing and Presenting Your Appeal - Director

It would be interesting for our board to know what struggles other tribunals might be facing and what action they have taken (or would like to take). If there is overlap among the boards, there might be some creative solutions for all Yukon tribunals.

RECOMMENDATION: YCCB recommends that a task force be established to conduct a tribunal health check to get a better sense of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to our administrative justice system.

The Multilateral Framework Agreement for federal funding was the result of some great negotiation between Government of Yukon (YG) and Canada. The funding occurred over three years. YCCB was invited at the start to give our thoughts on how those funds should be allocated. Our thoughts, as well as those from others targeted for consultation, were grouped into themes that we thought worked well. We would be interested to know overall how the funding program worked out and whether this type of arrangement might continue.

A framework for ELCC curriculum has been ongoing since last year. YCCB is part of an advisory panel that contributed some early thoughts to the development of this draft framework. We have yet to see or review the draft and we hope to provide feedback before this framework is adopted or implemented.

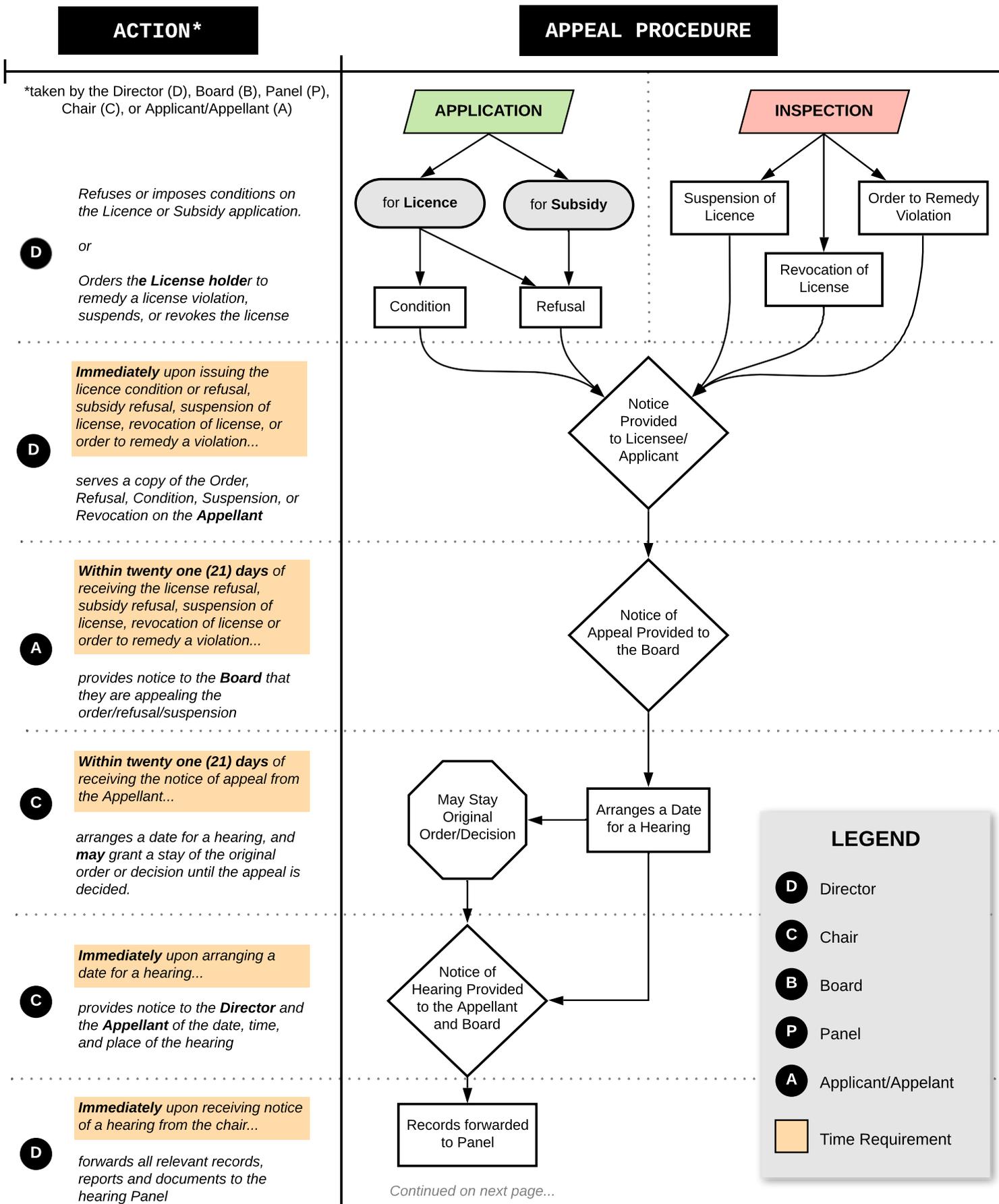
Another project we have been working on is showing the need to modernize the *Child Care Act* for reasons including.

- The language and intent of the *Act* do not fully reflect current best practices in ELCC and lag somewhat behind many other jurisdictions in Canada;
- Recommendations from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's review indicate the need to consider First Nation culture and heritage into ELCC;
- The Comprehensive Health Review conducted by the office of the Chief Medical Officer indicated a need to systemically rethink ELCC in Yukon, including bringing the management of child care services under the Department of Education;
- Due to a declining pool of early childhood educators, the critical need to attract qualified people to the field (and retain them) is getting much harder; and
- The stability and resiliency of essential services in ongoing and future emergency situations should be proactively mitigated.

RECOMMENDATION: The Yukon Child Care Board recommends that the *Child Care Act* be modernized to address current issues, reflect best practices in the field and to strengthen the ELCC industry as a whole.

YUKON CHILD CARE BOARD

- APPEAL PROCESS DIAGRAM -



LEGEND

- D** Director
- C** Chair
- B** Board
- P** Panel
- A** Applicant/Appellant
- Time Requirement

Continued from previous page...

Records forwarded to Panel

Panel Prepares for Hearing

Hearing

Decision

Dismisses the Appeal

Quashes the Original Order

Varies the Original Order/Condition/Remedy

Provides an Alternate Decision/Order

The Board May Vary the Decision/Order**

Before the date of the hearing...

P reviews the records, reports and documents and prepares for the hearing

On the date and time set for the hearing..

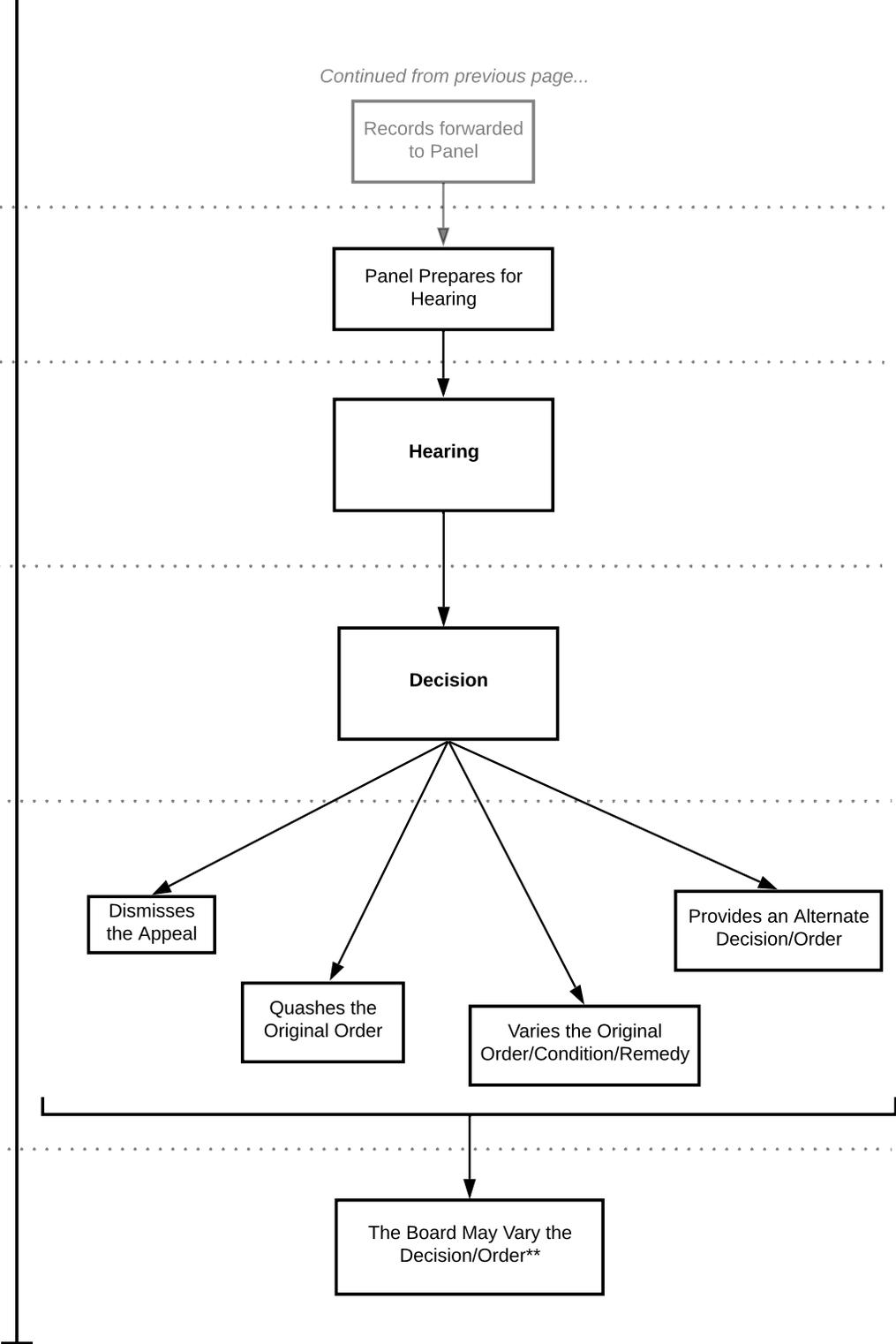
P holds the hearing

At or after the hearing...

P makes a decision to dismiss the appeal, quash the original order, vary the original order, condition or remedy, or to provide an alternate order or decision

Within fourteen (14) days of the panel making a decision/order after the hearing...

B may vary or revoke the order/decision made by the panel



PRIORITY 3: OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATION

Reaching out is something the YCCB has not been able to do extensively in the past because of a lack of resources. As per our legislated mandate, we must make sure the needs of parents and children are met, make informed recommendations to the Minister, and conduct reviews on a number of topics. These all require good communication and knowledge of what's happening.

We are actively pursuing the establishment of our own independent website. Finding relevant and current information on the YCCB can be challenging and we are concerned that there is a misperception from parents and members in the child care industry about what our board does, or that we exist.

We have a lot of information to share and want people to have access to it so they can make informed decisions. Related to the appeal process, for example, we feel strongly that would-be appellants might not have access to fair administrative justice if they are unable to find information easily during their preparations. An appeal process, regardless of the subject matter, can be quite daunting and we want people to feel as prepared as possible by giving them the ability to research ahead of time. Our website would ideally have contact information, guidelines for appealing decisions, publicly available appeal decisions, our business plans, and potentially links to areas on YG's website that are tough to find (list of child care centres, upcoming public engagement opportunities, etc.). We currently have a domain ready to go and most of the content is developed. We are looking for confirmation of financial resources to pursue this item.

We have been trying to be more proactive in working with other child care entities. We believe a strong communication network for the child care industry is paramount to evidence-based decision making, adapting to changing times, and identification of emerging issues. Our network includes, Child Care Services Unit (YG), licensed child care centres and family day homes, early learning practitioners, parents and legal guardians, the Yukon Child Care Association, Child Development Centre, Yukon College and students studying in the child care industry, and the Minister of Health and Social Services. Given the appropriate resources, our board would more easily be able to reach out to our network and provide more accurate and representative information in support of Ministerial decisions.

We have found some tools to use such as conference calling, Zoom, and letters, but In some cases the chair and board members have paid out of pocket to be able to reach out. It has been awkward at times and we are looking to enhance these processes.

RECOMMENDATION: The Yukon Child Care Board recommends that funds be provided so that the YCCB is able to develop and maintain an independent website, pay for conference calls and start a Zoom account.





IMPACT OF COVID19

COVID19 has been an interesting yet emotionally-diverse time for the child care industry, YG, and children and their families. March 31, 2020 was officially the last day of the reporting period for this annual report, but it is important to give a summary of what we know now from numerous video meetings, conference calls, conversations and surveys. We will leave the thorough analysis for next year! From YCCB's perspective. A few themes have emerged so far and while we have grouped them here, many are interrelated:

COMMUNICATION: This was a stressful and rapidly-changing time. Many people were caught off-guard. Many programs had a difficult time keeping up to date with changing guidelines, and were unaware when new iterations were posted. Some programs even reported discrepancies in information they were receiving from government depending on who they spoke with. Our board worked hard to provide advice and make recommendations, often with very tight turn-arounds. In our view, not consulting with the YCCB during this time was a missed opportunity to gain valuable knowledge and insight of the child care industry in a period of crisis. Towards the end of summer, our board was asked to provide advice on the draft Phase 3 guidelines for child care centres and we were pleased to accommodate.

DEFINING EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE: An interesting thing happened during COVID in that there seemed to be a bit of an identity crisis that emerged. Very early on, ELCC was named an essential service, but not in the sense of early cognitive, motor, emotional and social development of children. Instead, it was frequently mentioned that child care is imperative to enabling parents, especially essential and critical service workers, to get to work. The development piece seemed to fall away leaving many

that we spoke with feeling discouraged and under-appreciated. It is great that ELCC is valued in two very essential ways because this deeper understanding will help us consider future decisions more holistically.

FINANCIAL HARDSHIP: The financial uncertainty was one of the largest issues we heard about and discussed. One of the earliest briefings stated that programs "were not permitted to charge parent fees". This text later softened, but the message was hard to take for many because they were left without an income, especially those that decided to remain open (those that remained open would then not qualify for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit and other federal programs). This was made worse when programs were asked to give back March fees to parents. Staff at YG came up with a great financial package for programs to cover some operational expenses, larger portions of staff wages, and to account for the additional cleaning and sanitizing that was required. The complexity of the financial plan for programs, plus the uncertainty of what expenses would qualify at the time of reconciliation was, unfortunately, challenging for many. A more detailed assessment of the financial implications of COVID to the child care sector is necessary, especially as a mechanism to provide stability for an essential service.

MENTAL HEALTH: It would have been impossible to fully protect our youngest people from noticing what was happening around them during the COVID shutdowns and subsequent re-opening of businesses. While many of the orders and guidelines were made to protect people's physical health, the mental health of children and staff was not addressed as well. Obviously, mental health is a multi-faceted issue and difficult to sort out in a time when changes were happening daily. It is critical now though, to be proactive and come up with a plan that will also protect the future mental health of children and staff in the ELCC sector in similar circumstances.

GRATITUDE: Every single person working on responding to COVID seemed to always be doing the best possible job with the information they had. Government staff worked tirelessly, program staff and operators went above and beyond to comply to the changing needs. YCCB was invited to the discussion and contributed to the Phase 3 guidelines. There were challenges, frustrations, and fear from all sides, but overall people had the best intentions and worked very hard. I feel that our processes and planning will be even stronger with better collaboration.

SUMMARY OF FINANCIALS

The following table outlines the Board’s expenditures in the past two years. The YCCB's entire financial portfolio has been transferred from the Director of Family and Children's Services (FCS) to the Director of Community and Program Support within Social Services. This is a really positive shift from an adjudicative perspective. In an appeal hearing, the Director of FCS is the respondent justifying the decision being appealed. It's important that our board remain an impartial decision body. The shift away from FCS managing our expenses will greatly help to remove any perception of bias or conflict of interest in an appeal hearing setting.

There are a couple points of note to make regarding Table 1 below. First, the travel budget is reserved for board members in the communities that require coming to Whitehorse for meetings. As our one community member moved to Whitehorse, we haven't used that budget item in the last two years. The *Child Care Act* states that in appointing members to the board, geographical representation be considered. So although this item has not been used in the last two years, it is necessary to keep should a future member be from one of the communities.

Table 1. Yukon Child Care Board Expenditures for 2018-19 and 2019-20.

Item	Budgeted (\$)	Actual 2018-19 (\$)	Actual 2019-20 (\$)
Honoraria	10,000	1,799.50	3,652.25
Travel	4,000	N/A	N/A
Secretarial	10,000	6,694.36	9,018.07
Legal	7,500	7,231.80	5,177.50
Program Materials	2,000	N/A	N/A

Program Materials has been a budget item for years. It was always accounted for as a separate item from the secretarial budget item. In our last report, we mentioned that YG found no record of this line item. With some digging this year, we have recently determined that this item is included within the Secretarial contract. We were unaware of this and thought the item had been eliminated from our budget. Thankfully this is now cleared up because that is an important piece for us.

Finally, a quick note on Honouraria. From time to time, YCCB board members are able to include their time with the board as a part of their regular job responsibilities. In these cases, members have not submitted honorarium forms and our expenditures in this area are lower than normal.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the coming year, YCCB will have many interesting conversations! We plan on continuing to track the impact of COVID and present a "one year later" analysis. I'm sure it will be insightful and interesting. This analysis will look at perspectives from ELCC programs, YG, and parents to give a picture of what it was like during COVID.

The Premier has announced about working on a plan for Universal Child Care and the Comprehensive Health Review recommended moving child care services to the Department of Education. We want to be a part of those conversations and offer our thoughts. I also hope that some deeper conversations about modernizing the Yukon Child Care Act can happen. We hope by our next annual report that our website at www.yukonchildcareboard.com will have been launched and that some of our resources materials printed, posted and distributed.

Finally, we are hoping to solidify a financial plan moving forward that best enables YCCB to more meaningfully meet our mandate under the Yukon *Child Care Act*.

MEET THE BOARD



Amy Ryder, Chair: I am a mom of twin 9-year old girls and they are thriving in school because of how well the child care system prepared them for school. I have been with the YCCB for eight years because of how much I believe in the child care field and the people who work so hard for our children.



Clayton Keats, Vice-Chair: I arrived in Yukon in 1998 when I moved from my hometown of Bonavista, NL. I've served the Child Care field in many capacities and have been working at Church of the Nazarene Daycare since 2002, where I also hold the position of Associate Pastor.



Maggie Powter: I co-own and operate Little Wonders Preschool and Family Program and I'm a mother to three wonderful children. I have worked in the field of early childhood for over 20 years in many capacities. I have a Bachelor's and Masters degree focused on Early Childhood Education.



Jessica Dyck: I was born and raised in Tagish and I have been working in Early Childhood Education since 2007. My background is in Early Childhood Education and Business Administration, and I plan to continue expanding my knowledge and education



Paige Galette: I am a nationally-based community organizer and educator. I have a strong background in governance and policy and bring over 15 years of experience serving on NGO boards. My interest in YCCB is understanding the challenges that may present for single, young and racialized people.



Myke McPhee: I've retired after a lengthy career as organizational specialist in a number of federal departments across Canada. I have an interest in government policy and enjoy working within the confines of legislation. I am very interested in Early Childhood Education and helping the field grow.



Cyndi Desharnais: I am a long-time Yukoner and believe that ages 0 to 6 is the greatest learning curve in a person's life. I have been in the early childhood education field for nearly 30 years as a Day Care Director. I am President of the Yukon Child Care Association and am an active member of the Canadian Child Care Federation Council.



Sophie Partridge, Administrative Support: I arrived in Yukon in 1972 and quickly adapted to life in the Yukon. I worked with the Government of Yukon in many exciting capacities and began supporting YCCB in 1998. I know how vital the work of YCCB is to the overall well-being of children.

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