Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting
Tuesday, October 21, 7:30 pm/Immediately following Staff Appreciation Event
Chairperson: Rebecca Koroll
In-Person Meeting in Bright Starts Gymnasium

Minutes

*** Please note that all relevant documents listed below for this meeting are located in this month's Board of Directors Meetings folder ***

In Attendance: Rebecca, Derek, Avery, Yuntian, Kaitlin, Valarie, Katie, Andrea, Sean, Janice, Davene, Alyssa, Maeve, Stacey and Karen
Regrets: Patrick
Absent: None

Meeting called to order at 7:25

7:25 **Approval** of Agenda – **Rebecca**
Moved by Andrea
13 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:25 **Approval** of September 16, 2025, Meeting Minutes – **Rebecca**
Moved by Derek.
11 in favour, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:26 **Crisis Management Subcommittee Report** – **Avery**

The Crisis Management Subcommittee submitted a memo for inclusion in the October 21, 2025 board meeting package, outlining all actions taken since the previous meeting in September.

The subcommittee discussed adjusting legal expenses for the 2025/2026 budget to support ongoing action items proposed.

Approval of expenditures of up to $3,000 for additional legal costs related to the ongoing investigation conducted by the Crisis Management Subcommittee – **Rebecca**
Moved by Alyssa.
13 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:55 **Treasurer's Report** – **Yuntian**

- Yuntian provided an overview of September 2025 and YTD financial results.
- Full financial details are available in the *October 2025 Treasurer's Report* PowerPoint, located in the Finance Folder on the Board's Google Drive.
    - September 2025 Highlights: Actual revenue is higher than budgeted ($23,813) due to CWELCC funding and subsidy fees being higher than budgeted; Total expenses are lower than budgeted ($82,336) which includes actual payroll expenses being lower than budgeted wages and salaries

($53,930) AND general and administrative expenses being lower than budgeted ($28,248); Overall, net income is $106,148 higher than budgeted when we account for higher total revenue and lower total expenses this month.
    - YTD Highlights: Total revenue is higher than budgeted ($230,991) and total expenses are lower than budgeted ($14,852), therefore total net income is higher than budgeted ($245,843); YTD actual as % of annual budget is 65.31% (based on 75% year completed to date)
    - Balance Sheet Highlights: Positive cash flow of $116,000 in September and investments increased by $19,000; Overall, cash flow plus investments increased from 1.34M in August to 1.48M in September.

Discussion:

- A review of YTD payroll expenses, which includes the misappropriated funds, shows the corporation is only 2.96% over budget.
- The Executive Director noted that while CWELCC may claw back some of the budgeted funds during their review process, the organization has sufficient internal resources to absorb the impact if necessary, as demonstrated in the September 2025 budget highlights above.

8:01 Executive Director's Report – Stacey

- Stacey provided a summary of key updates. The full report is available in the *October 2025 Executive Director's Report* file, located in the October Meeting Folder on the Board's Google Drive. Highlights include:
    - Financial updates –
        - CWELCC Cost Review
            - The corporation received notification on October 20 regarding next steps in the CWELCC budget review process. A report is due by November 6, with further details to be shared at the November board meeting. This is a new process, and the team is learning alongside the region as it unfolds.
        - PD Day Funding Application
            - The application for regional PD Day funding recovery was submitted on October 27. As a result, parent fees for October will be reduced, since the region is covering the cost of the day instead of families.

    - Health, Safety, and Nutrition –
        - **Health**: While children have remained mostly healthy, there has been an increase in staff illness over the past month.
        - **Emergency Response**: On Thursday, October 16, EMS was called after an educator experienced concerning symptoms while supervising children on the playground. The decision to call 911 was made out of caution and care for the individual's wellbeing.
        - **Security Enhancements**: The University of Waterloo is implementing a new fob entry system across all buildings. Existing WatCards will be converted into fobs, with associated costs to be covered by the centre. Installation is scheduled for early 2026, and coordination is underway with IST.
        - **Child Care Centre Safety Measures**: Changes have been made to the use of parking spaces near entryways, windows, and playgrounds

to enhance safety. Although no formal guidelines have been issued by the Ministry of Education, UW Sustainable Transportation responded quickly by installing temporary barriers at all three campus childcare facilities. UW Grounds plans to remove these temporary barriers, requesting the centres submit billable work requests to cover labor costs. An email has been sent to Alice Knight (Director, Strategy and Operations) and Kate Windsor (Director, Health and Safety Office) seeking guidance on a permanent solution. Funding remains uncertain, with no announcements from Regional or Provincial authorities regarding financial support. We also want to request bollards for the X lot side of the building as well.

Discussion re: new fob system:

- Watcards can be double programmed to be used in multiple departments for parents who are also Waterloo employees.
- The office has a reader and can activate and re-activate that process will not change

    - Enrollment –
        - All programs remain at 100% occupancy.

    - Staffing/Programs –
        - Hired a new kitchen staff member
        - Each program was provided with a $500 toy/book budget to enhance classroom activities
        - Educators requesting a second tablet per classroom (13 tablets for approximately $75000).

Approval of spending $7500 for a second iPad tablet per classroom – **Rebecca**
Moved by Janice.
13 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

- "Other" Updates:
    - Joint Pre-Qualification Process for Child Care Sites in Publicly Funded Schools and Regionally Acquired Sites
        - A new pre-qualification process has been launched to identify not-for-profit childcare operators for newly constructed centres in publicly funded schools and regionally acquired sites. The process is being led by Children's Services on behalf of WCDSB, WRDSB, and the Region of Waterloo. This initiative is separate from the CWELCC enrollment process for independently acquired sites.
        - All not-for-profit operators with a signed service agreement are eligible to apply, including single-site operators and those not currently operating in schools.
        - The Region aims to pre-qualify up to ten operators, with agreements valid from December 1, 2025, to December 31, 2031, or until all agreements are signed.

        - Interested applicants must register as a Plan Taker in the Region's bidding system, with a one-time registration fee of $138.64.
        - Proposal deadline: November 4, 2025, at 2:00 PM via Bids & Tenders.
        - A virtual information session was attended on October 14.

Discussion:

- The board has engaged in several discussions about potential expansion opportunities. This pre-qualification process through publicly funded schools is just another option to consider as there are currently no CWELCC spaces.
- Concerns were raised about the limitations of this model, including:
    - A requirement that no more than 50% of spaces be prioritized.
    - No significant financial benefit to Bright Starts under this arrangement.
    - Potential implications of relocating off-campus.
- After consideration, the board decided not to pursue the application, concluding that the opportunity is not the right fit at this time.

- <u>Digibot Administration Software</u> –
    - Two successful fee pulls have been completed via RBC Express, and monthly fee pulls are now back on schedule.
    - One NSF incident occurred, likely due to the timing between September and October pulls; the fee was waived.
    - The leadership team is now using a bulk email tool to communicate with families.
    - Educators began using Digibot for electronic attendance tracking on October 1.
    - Digibot's communication features will soon be activated, allowing families to receive updates on meals, naps, diapers, and photos via the portal and email. This will replace Lillio; families will be given notice to download any content before the transition.
    - Upcoming additions include accident reports, medication forms, and playground safety checks.
    - Initial troubleshooting is underway for staff registration, training modules, and group configurations.
    - Parents can input their own vacation instead of emailing the director/educators.
    - App coming in the new year
    - No specific feedback about Digibot was received from board members at this meeting.

- <u>Logo Design/Rebrand</u> –
    - Would like to make this work a priority over the coming months.

- <u>Regional Child Care PD Day</u> –
    - Bright Starts will be closed on Monday, October 27th for the Regional Child Care PD Day, which includes sector-specific workshops at Bingemans in the morning and an afternoon session

on-site focused on the learning environment, facilitated by a KW Habilitation resource consultant.
    - The educators are looking forward to this day; although the centre is closed it is still a full workday for employees.

8:35 Fundraising Committee Report – Davene

- The committee proposed a donut fundraiser to support the purchase of a new pergola. The initiative is considered low effort with high returns, generating approximately $5–$7 per sale for the Centre. While a two-week window in November was initially considered, the board agreed to proceed in February, potentially aligning the campaign with Valentine's Day.
- The committee also recommended continuing to promote ongoing fundraisers through Fundscrip gift cards and Mabel's Labels through the end of the year. Families will be notified via email closer to the holidays.

8:40 Annual Staff Appreciation/ Year of Service Celebration Committee – Janice

- Proposed releasing the staff environment survey shortly after the event to capture timely feedback. Staff who complete the survey will be entered into a draw for one of two $50 gift cards.
- Board members are encouraged to share any feedback about the event directly with Janice.

--- New Business/Items for next agenda (November 18)

- None proposed.

--- Regrets for next meeting (November 18)

- Karen sends their regrets.

--- Feedback (from Gmail and Box)

- Parent (SEP 24): "So happy with Bright Starts so far. Karen has been so helpful and gave us great advice for making the transition to daycare as smooth as possible for our daughter."
- Parent (SEP 26): "Just wanted to thank you all for the wonderful job you are doing. The daycare, and all its staff, have been a brilliantly bright spot in a dark year for us."

--- ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting adjourned at **8:45**