

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: DECEMBER 4, 2025**

**28<sup>th</sup> Annual Niagara Early Learning & Child Care Appreciation and Recognition Gala**  
**Celebrating Community Partnerships and the Exceptional Passion and Commitment of Niagara's Early Learning Sector**

*Niagara Falls:* The Annual Niagara Early Learning and Child Care Appreciation and Recognition Gala took place last evening at The Americana Conference Resort in Niagara Falls. During this special event, **twenty-three** early learning professionals, programs, volunteers, and students received recognition for their outstanding commitment to children and families in Niagara. Emcee Aiko Iwashita of Niagara's Dream 105.7FM supported with acknowledging the honourees at this special event, which was coordinated by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre (ECCDC), a longstanding charitable organization. More than five hundred guests including early childhood educators, kindergarten teams, home child care professionals, students, volunteers, EarlyON Teams, and community partners were in attendance at this year's gala event, which was sponsored by **Louise Kool and Galt**, Canada's leading supplier of classroom resources and equipment.

**Niagara's Dream 105.7FM** was this year's media sponsor, and **ten** local organizations also supported the event, including: the **YMCA of Niagara, Walker Industries, Mountainview Building Group, A Child's World Family Child Care Services, Little One's Lunches, CIBC, District School Board of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, and Skycomp Solutions**. The ECCDC is also grateful for several other local businesses who contributed items for the silent auction fundraiser.

Multiple local dignitaries and community partners offered greetings at this year's event, including: Chris Bittle, Member of Parliament, Fred Davies, Member of Parliament, the office of Jennie Stevens, Member of Provincial Parliament, Parliamentary Assistant to the Ontario Minister of Education, Paul Calandra, Acting Regional Chair Rob Foster, Mike DeDivitiis, Deputy Mayor of Thorold, Jim Diodati, Mayor of Niagara Falls, Kayla Jourdan, Manager of Systems, Planning and Evaluation at Niagara Region, Beth Deazeley, Registrar and CEO of the College of Early Childhood Educators, Megan Robinson, Manager at Six Nations Polytechnic, and Courtney Scott and Early Learning and Child Care Advisor at the Métis Nation of Ontario.

The evening's recognition presentations were supported by many community partner agencies, including: Bienenstock Natural Playgrounds, Brock University, Children's Learning Garden Home Licensing Agency, District School Board of Niagara, Fort Erie Aboriginal Head Start, Fort Erie Native Friendship Centre, Kiwanis Clubs of Niagara, Niagara Catholic District School Board, Niagara Child Care Sector Executive Committee, Niagara College, Niagara Region Children's Services, Pathstone Mental Health, and Wee Watch Home Child Care. Senator Jean-Jacques Séguin from the Métis Nation of Ontario Niagara Region Métis Council was also in attendance to open and close the event.

Many recognition presentations were offered throughout the evening, including The **Supporting Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship Ambassador**, sponsored by Walker Industries and presented to Terra Viva Montessori Bilingual, and the **Licensed Child Care Centre Administrator Recognition for Exceptional Leadership and Commitment** was extended to JoAnne Turner for her outstanding work and commitment to the sector. Centre Éducatif La Boîte à soleil – La Marsh was the commendable recipient of the **Nurturing Children's Connection to Nature Program Champion** recognition, and the **Exceptional Volunteer and Support Staff Spotlight** was presented to Karen Hodgins. The **EarlyON Child and Family Centre Team Recognition** was received by the team of Anita Sansalone and Denise Iliffe, and the **Commitment to Continuous Professional Learning Distinction** was presented to Candace King. The **Margaret Hamilton Graduating Student** recognized Joshua Martineau, and YMCA Child Care – Smith was honoured with the **Kelly Albanese Child Care Program Inclusion Recognition**. Ashley Rossi, Lubna Alhaj and Nasreena Nazeer were recognized for their outstanding efforts as the recipients of the **Licensed Home Child Care Professionalism Acknowledgement of Achievement** recognition, and the **Kindergarten Team Commitment to Excellence in Exemplifying the Kindergarten Program's Six Fundamental Principles** was presented to Ashley Wright, Erryn Goddard, Laurie Hebert and Elinor DiMaria for their extraordinary achievements. The **Early Childhood Educator Model of Excellence and Professionalism** recognition honoured Randa Ali for her exceptional dedication, and Strive Niagara – Welland Parent Child Centre was the esteemed recipient of the **Care Advocate for Excellence in Supporting Children's Mental Health and Well Being**. Sweet Love Child Care was honoured to receive the **Outstanding Commitment to Fostering an Inclusive, Diverse and Equitable Early Learning Environment**, and the **Indoor Innovative Early Learning Environment Recognition** was received by the team of Chrislove Blanc, Antonine Pierre Jean-Louis, Aurélie Miambe, and Mireille Andabhati Alliro.

**For further information, please contact Lorrey Arial Bonilla, Executive Director, Early Childhood Community Development Centre at 905.646.7311 ext.321 or [larial@eccdc.org](mailto:larial@eccdc.org).**

*The ECCDC is a charitable organization inspiring excellence in early learning and child care through thought leadership, cutting edge training, innovative resources and coaching services highlighting best practices and emerging trends. In the more than 20 years since its creation by local volunteers, the ECCDC has become Canada's leading early learning training, resource and referral organization. The ECCDC is primarily funded by Niagara Region Children's Services.*