



ANNUAL 2023 REPORT



Our Values Commitment to You

Alisha Michiels | Chair, Board of Directors

As we reflect on the past year, I am humbled by the dedication and passion that drives our organization forward. At the heart of everything we do lies a steadfast commitment to our values and a shared vision for the future of early learning and child care.

Our board meetings commence with a review of our mission, vision, values and strategic priorities:

1. Influence early learning and child care system planning,
2. Enable sustainable growth within an expanding system, and
3. Ensure a flourishing team.

In embracing diversity, equity and inclusion as core principles, we recognize the transformative power of **community**. Through ongoing education and reflection – at the board table and within our leadership and centre teams, we strive to dismantle barriers and foster a sense of belonging for all who walk through our doors.



This past year, our **learning** focus on enterprise risk management underscored the importance of aligning expectations and accountabilities. By setting clear risk tolerances for each performance indicator in our strategic plan, we empower our CEO and leadership team to make informed decisions that advance our strategic objectives.

Our **advocacy** efforts remain unwavering as we champion a sustainable funding model, improved access to high quality early learning and care programs and for professional pay and decent work. To that end, the board once again made strategic investments in our 2024 budget to support our workforce. This includes compensation, improved benefits, extending RisingOaks' WorkWell project and to reduce split shifts, where possible.

One doesn't typically think of creativity when they think of a board of directors. At RisingOaks, creativity permeates every aspect of our work, from strategic planning to playground design. **Creativity** helps us to reimagine possibilities, to push boundaries, to strive for excellence in governance and in our early learning and care programs.

Above all, **love** is at the heart of everything we do. As a board, we take time to connect, to listen and to learn from one another. We are united by a shared passion for making a difference. Simply put, we love what we do and are proud to serve as your board of directors.



COMMUNITY



Board of Directors

Members of the volunteer board of directors at RisingOaks Early Learning Ontario play a crucial role in our organization by actively participating in the organization's mission and objectives. This dedicated group, including parents of children in our programs and community members with diverse backgrounds, contributes their expertise to advance the goals of the organization, fostering a collaborative environment that benefits both RisingOaks and the wider communities in which we serve.



Alisha Michiels
Chair



Julia Bloom
Vice Chair



Jennifer Tieu
Treasurer



Amanda Stevens
Past Chair



Blessing Akpan
Director



Jessica Ronzio
Director



Karen McIlroy
Director



Katherine Walsh
Director



Paul Okoye
Director



Robert MacDonald
Director



Stephen Brown
Director



Lori Prospero
CEO, Secretary

COMMUNITY



By the Numbers

Children, their parents, educators and staff belong here. We nurture our community so that everyone who is part of it feels at home. This creates a safe and harmonious place to learn.



1374 | Children Enrolled

1164 | Families Served

2829 | Program Hours

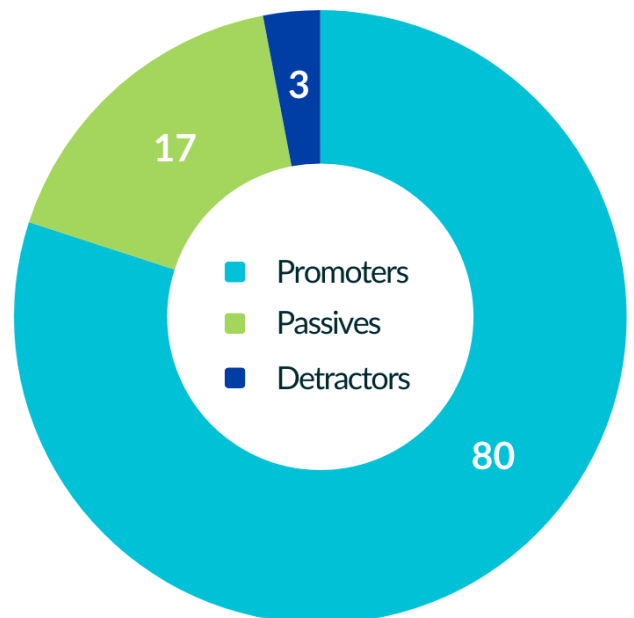
54 | Members

262 | Employees

101 | Placement Students

552 | Government Relations Touchpoints

23 | Board/Committee Volunteers





Nurturing Growth: A Year of Progress and Promise

Lori Prospero, CAE | Chief Executive Officer

Reflecting on 2023, the journey has been one of purposeful action guided by our strategic plan, firmly rooted in the belief that every child - and every employee - deserves an environment where they can thrive.

RisingOaks Early Learning continues to influence system planning across multiple levels of government with a 22% increase in our government relations activities. From meetings with various service system managers to hosting consultations with ministers, a podium announcement, and our work with partners and allies, we've actively shaped the landscape of child care.

Expansion has been a key focus, aligning with the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care agreement. To support sustainable growth, the board approved an expansion decision-making flowchart integrated within our enterprise risk management framework. It's already been put to good use, resulting in successfully securing the role of child care operator for a new school in development. This marks a significant milestone in our growth journey, with construction for RisingOaks Early Learning | St. Patrick set to commence in Spring 2024.

However, growth must be sustainable, ensuring the continued excellence of our programs. Our leadership team remains diligent, tracking key metrics to maintain quality and reduce burnout. Additionally, implementation of our strategic HR growth plan, though delayed by external factors - including an unknown funding formula, has seen progress on critical recommendations, setting the stage for further enhancements to our team's effectiveness and well-being.

With so much on the go, it is important that we don't lose sight of our priority to ensure a flourishing team. Twice annual employee surveys, conducted by the YMCA WorkWell team, reveal encouraging trends in engagement, culture, well-being and performance, with all scores in the healthy range and improvements in burnout scores.

This is a testament to the leadership team's focus on appreciation and recognition, disconnecting from work, leading above the line, courageous conversations and more.

Our 2023 pedagogy project aimed to increase educator competence and confidence in the organization's learn how to learn approach through the integration of personal and organizational values into curriculum planning and implementation. Observations, along with written, photo and video documentation support success in this project.

Overall, 2023 was a year of progress. At the half-way point in our strategic plan, 61% of indicators have been achieved or are in progress/on-track. In addition, despite sector-wide challenges, we have made great strides in our diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives with eight (8) reference group meetings, trainings with key staff/champions, development of video-based group trainings, and initial work completed on policy development. This foundational work will help to shape the development of a DEIA Action Plan and communications strategy to come.

Looking ahead, RisingOaks remains focused on its vision, where every child - and employee - is valued and reaches their potential.





We've Got your Back... and Ours!

As leaders supporting children's growth and development, RisingOaks continues to be a strong voice. We are dedicated to quality education, affordability, and accessibility for all learners. Here is a summary of the work undertaken on behalf of our community.

FEDERAL

- Meetings with Federal ELCC Secretariat
 - May 31: expansion, workforce, CWELCC successes and challenges
 - June 28: immigration issues for ECEs, CWELCC implementation, inclusion supports
 - Dec 11: CWELCC agreement
- Meetings with Members of Parliament
 - May 23: Hon. Karina Gould, Tim Louis
 - Aug 23 Nov 17: Valerie Bradford
- Dec 6: Met with Federal-Provincial-Territorial Deputy Ministers ELCC Steering Committee to discuss regulation of the profession.



PROVINCIAL

- Meetings with Ontario Ministry of Education
 - March 23: ECE workforce issues, post-graduate work permit to permanent residency transition, CWELCC capped fees
 - July 20: CWELCC IT modernization consultation
 - Sept 23: CWELCC, expansion, workforce
- Submissions to government
 - CWELCC Funding Formula consultation
 - Ontario Pre-budget submission
 - Ontario Budget Submission
- Meetings with Members of Provincial Parliament
 - July 31: Jess Dixon
 - Nov 17: Hon., Stephen Lecce, Brian Riddell, Mike Harris



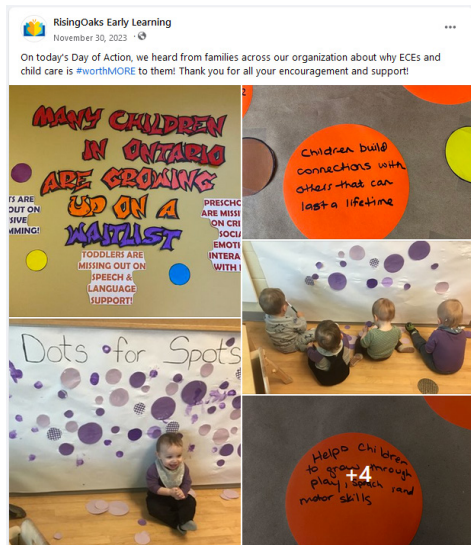
REGIONAL/MUNICIPAL

- Meetings with service system managers (SSMs) re: expansion opportunities and processes
 - London, Haldimand-Norfolk, Halton, Peel, Stratford, Waterloo





Social Shares



RisingOaks Early Learning
November 17, 2023

We are thrilled to announce that RisingOaks Early Learning | Oak Creek was selected for a special visit from the Honourable Stephen Lecce, Minister of Education, to announce the ongoing efforts on the Canada-Wide Early Learning & Child Care Plan (CWELCC) and specific details for here in the Waterloo Region.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the staff, both on the front and behind the scenes, for their hard work and dedication in preparing for this momentous occasion. It is a great honour for us as a child care organization in the Waterloo Region to continue advocating for the child care sector and the establishment of a universal child care system. We also express our deepest appreciation for our committed and passionate RECs who are truly #worthmore. Thank you all for being part of this remarkable journey! 🙌



RisingOaks Early Learning
June 19, 2023

Families waiting for child care are worth more! We need child care funding and a workforce and expansion plan to ensure access for all families.

The affordability of child care is a great step forward, but accessibility remains a challenge. The waitlists for child care are long, and the rollout of CWELCC and the staffing crisis have only made them longer. Many families sit on waitlists for years and never receive a spot in child care. Families who are new to Canada find it... See more

Children belong in child care, not on waitlists.

RisingOaks Early Learning
August 3, 2023

Yesterday, we had a special visitor at RisingOaks Early Learning | Our Lady of Fatima, Valerie Bradford, MP For Kitchener South Hespeler. MP Bradford enjoyed a tour of the centre with supervisor Lisa Rintoul and was joined by CEO Lori Prospero for a discussion on workforce strategy and expansion.

#KitchenerSouthHespeler #EarlyLearning #WorkforceStrategy #Childcare #CWELCC #Expansion



RisingOaks Early Learning
May 23, 2023

We were delighted to have the Honourable Karina Gould, federal Minister of Families, Children and Social Development, and Tim Louis, MP for Kitchener-Conestoga, join our leadership team for a round table discussion on the implementation of the Canada-Wide Early Learning & Child Care (CWELCC) program. CWELCC aims to improve affordability, enhance quality, increase access and support inclusion, all while maintaining high-quality child care with a strong and supported workforce.

Today we discussed funding, expansion, the need for a wage grid, inclusion supports and an equitable approach to ensuring a high-quality early learning and child care system. The Minister and MP Louis also visited RisingOaks Early Learning | John Sweeney and chatted with the children as they ate their lunch.





A Pedagogy Journey

Kristine Parsons, RECE | Director of Operations

In 2023 we embarked on a pedagogy journey of exploring our practice from a place of values and vision. We know that the most significant brain development happens between zero and five. These are called the early years and at RisingOaks Early Learning we believe that early childhood education is about teaching children how to learn.

In April 2023 the centre teams came together for a day of learning. One of the key conversations on this day was enhancing pedagogical leadership through values-driven curriculum. Through observation and information gathering we know that often children and educators' value very similar things. Both educators and children equally value moments of engagement, opportunities for risk, messy play and exploration. You only have to spend a few minutes looking at our Facebook and Instagram pages to see these

values in the everyday activities taking place at RisingOaks.

On this day in April we also started a new tradition that we plan to implement annually. Employees were encouraged to reflect on the meaning of commitments. If they felt ready, they were encouraged to write down a commitment to the children, families and/or colleagues and place it in the commitment bowl. Throughout the year these commitments have been posted on our social media channels. However, while it's easy to make a commitment in writing, the true measure of the commitment is in demonstrating the actions that fulfill that promise. For educators the most impactful way to show the commitment in action is often through pictures and documentation. Interpreting that precise moment in a child's journey of learning how to learn requires a keen eye and a deep grasp of pedagogical principles.



LOVE

Our Commitments to You

Every child is unique. Getting to know them, understanding them, connecting with them so that we can provide them with meaningful discoveries is what our educators and staff are committed to. We love what we do. It's as simple as that.



"I commit to think about children's values and prioritize them over mine."

~ RisingOaks' Educator





Our intuitiveness and expertise allow us to help children explore and develop their curiosity. Our expert educators identify each child's uniqueness and teach them the tools that help them reach their full potential.



"I commit to better understand the learning taking place from a child's lens."

~ RisingOaks' Educator



As children learn how to learn through play, it naturally sparks a child's creativity. Discovering new ideas and concepts fosters their imagination.



"I commit to always staying flexible in my practice to create optimal learning opportunities for children."

~ RisingOaks' Educator





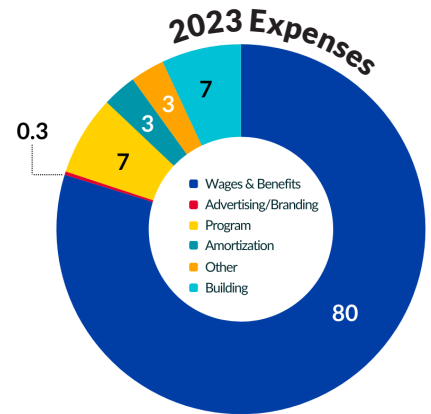
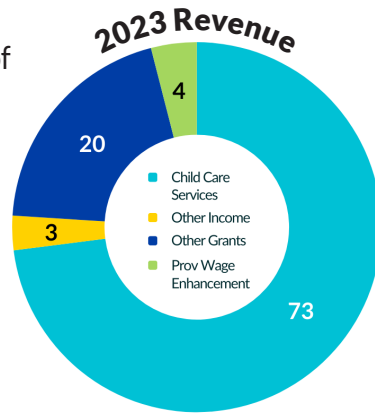
Treasurer's Report

Jennifer Tieu | Treasurer

In November 2022, the diligent oversight of our board of directors led to the approval of the 2023 budget, a comprehensive plan focused on operational excellence within our early learning and care programs and progress on our strategic priorities. As with any forward-thinking exercise, adjustments are sometimes necessary. By mid-December, projections were updated to reflect an anticipated deficit of (\$202,184). This adjustment was informed by the welcome news of additional funding earmarked for the workforce through the Canada-wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) agreement, as well as a strategic decision to self-fund gaps within this program. Such decisions underscore our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of care and service to the families we serve.

Enrolment remains strong in full-day programs (i.e., infant, toddler, preschool), while school-age programs continue to stabilize. This is reflected in our financial results. Revenue from child care services was up 14%, largely attributed to Oak Creek being open for its first 12-month cycle and improvements in school-age enrolment.

Moreover, grants saw a substantial increase, with a \$600,000 boost to the general operating grant and an additional \$787,000 in one-time funding from the Region of Waterloo. Together with budgeted funds, this supported various initiatives including quality continuous improvement, repairs and maintenance, playground enhancements, provision of play materials, diversity-equity-inclusion-anti-racism efforts, and accessibility improvements. Overall, owing to prudent fiscal management, RisingOaks ended the year with a surplus of \$310,884.

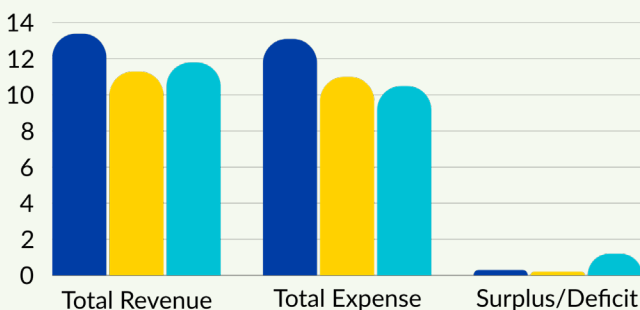


The board of directors maintains several internally restricted funds to support its mission. During 2023, funds were drawn from reserves to support those requiring flex care schedules (\$35,000) and the development of natural playgrounds (\$509,000). A top-up was approved to replenish the playground fund to support ongoing maintenance and the final playground project to be completed in early 2024, bringing our original vision to fruition. In addition, the board approved a transfer of the balance from the former pandemic recovery fund into a newly created enrolment stabilization and growth fund to support existing sites and expansion.

Your board of directors remains committed to monitoring RisingOaks' financial stability and liquidity as the landscape of early childhood education and care continues to change for the better.

View the full Audited Financial Statements at: <https://risingoaks.ca/agm>

Year-over-year Results by the Millions



	Surplus/ Deficit	Total Expense	Total Revenue
2023	\$310,884	\$13,039,648	\$13,350,532
2022	\$227,806	\$11,040,791	\$11,268,597
2021	\$1,220,497	\$10,542,623	\$11,763,120



RisingOaks
Early Learning

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St. Luke

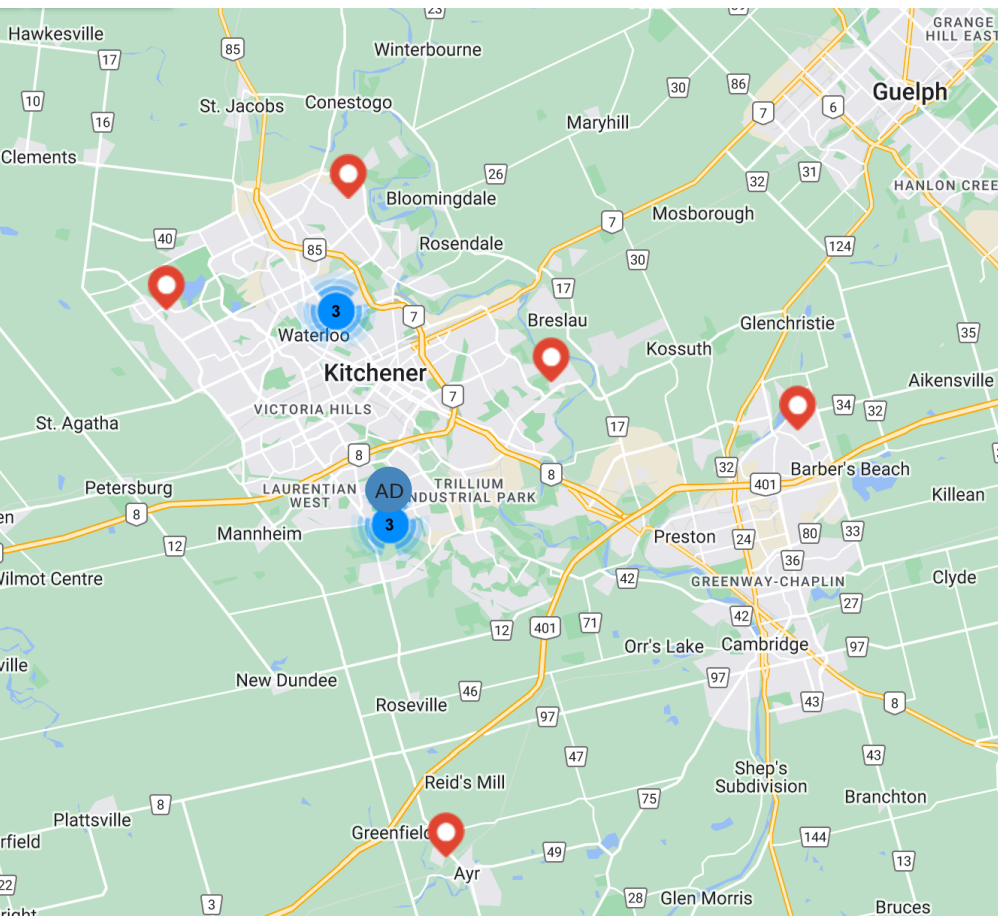
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