

Parent Meeting Minutes – January 21, 2006

a) Election – What does it mean for the childcare industry? The Children’s Garden recently received a number of publications regarding the upcoming election and the impact a Conservative government could have on the entire industry. Our concern is the scrapping of the Proposed National Child Care program may or may not affect the Stabilization Grant money that we are currently receiving from Community Services. The concern being that if the money is cut off at the Federal level it won’t funnel down to the provinces as it has for the past 4 years. We are sincerely apologetic if our email regarding the Harper Government offended or upset anyone.

b) Grant Money – The Department of Community Services has been monetarily supplementing daycare workers salaries over the past 4 years by \$2 per hour for each qualified staff which works out to be \$4,000 per year. This represents a critical percent of a teacher’s salary. Unqualified staff receive \$.50 per hour, or \$1,000 per year. The fact that ALL daycares receive this grant money without even having to make an application indicates that the government is aware of the fragile state of the industry. Because the work of daycare teachers is seen as “domestic woman’s work” it is a low paying industry. We are seeing on a national basis more and more of our best and most experienced teachers leaving the industry because they can’t make ends meet on their meager salaries. A parent asked the question, “What will happen to the Children’s Garden if the grant money is pulled”. The Children’s Garden is a going concern. Worst case, we will have to do more fundraising, cut back on discretionary expenses, put off repairs and maintenance, or raise parent fees. Having heard about recent closures of non-profit government subsidized daycares the government is well aware of the struggles all daycare face. Pulling the grant would result in most centres having to apply for non-profit status so they would be eligible to apply for subsidies and grants only available to the non-profit sector. But because the government isn’t interested in being in the business of running daycares, we expect the grant money will continue for years to come.

c) Fundraisers – What’s next? We are going to be having our first ever raffle. Tickets will be on sale starting Monday, January 30th until Feb. 9th. We will draw on Feb. 10th. Our grand prize will be a one-night stay at the Quality Inn Suites off the Kearney Lake Road. It’s valued at \$149. We are working on movie tickets and gift certificates to a family restaurant. 3 Mary Kay prizes will be up for grabs as well. We will be doing another round of cookie dough orders in late January. We have been promised that the dough will arrive in February. The delay with our last order was that the fundraising company was waiting on more orders from other school as they have to order in 50 case lots which means 400 cases of one kind of dough. That’s a lot of dough. In March we will be doing another Cinnabon fundraiser. This is a franchise of which the local store is at the Halifax Shopping Centre. Their buns are truly finger licking good and raised the most “dough” for us last year of all our fundraisers, almost \$1,000. In April, we will be doing another pie fundraiser for Easter. More information will follow on all of these as the time approaches.

d) This Spring we will be installing an air conditioning unit on the first level of the daycare. Also we need a new roof which usually takes 2-3 days. We will try to have it installed during the weekend so as not to inconvenience the children or put them at risk.

e) Groups and teachers – We often hear from parents “When will my child move to the next group?” The groups are established in September and ideally all of the groups are full at this time. Therefore, the only movement will occur if a child leaves, goes to part-time, etc. We determine the groups based on age so that if they all start together at the beginning of September and no ones leaves for the year then they will all be approximately the same

number of days, months apart as when they started. For example, if a group of 6 Junior Toddlers starts in Sept. at the age of 2 and by the end of August they are almost 3 they will still all be together and therefore with their peers. Angie is leaving us at the end of February to join her boyfriend out West. She has been with us for 2 + years and is very sad to say goodbye to her "babies". She will be greatly missed. More will follow about her replacement. We wish Angie all the best in the next chapter of her life.

f) Parenting magazine – One of the parents at the last meeting suggested that we circulate articles of interest regarding childcare issues such as temper tantrums, biting, eating, etc. The daycare has 2 copies of Parenting magazine available for parents to sign out for a week and return. If you have other child rearing magazines that you would like to put into circulation please bring them in.

g) Guest speakers – Elizabeth of the Senior Preschool room suggested it would be a good idea to invite "experts" in their field to present and answer questions regarding topics suggested by the parents. If you have a topic you would like discussed please send it to us and we will look for someone to attend our quarterly meeting.

h) Menu – We noticed that the children weren't eating certain meals anymore so it was time for a change. Mari has been trying new recipes such as sweet and sour meatballs, meatloaf, tortillas, pancakes, roast beef, etc. with much success. We will be finalizing our menu by the end of Feb. and emailing you a copy. If you have recipes that your kids love please send them to us.

i) Fire Drills – We are required by Community Services to have a fire drill once a month so the children can practice how to evacuate the daycare in the event of a fire. If you were at our Christmas party the alarm was set off and the parents were able to witness how fast and well trained the children have become as a result of these drills.

j) Book Orders- Instead of giving out book orders to all of the parents we will be placing them in a wall mounted plastic file folder in each cubby area which will contain copies of each book order stapled together so you can grab one if you so desire.

k) Changes in addresses and phone numbers – We have been working on tax receipts for the 2005 year which will be available by the end of January. It has come to our attention that we don't have current home addresses, phone numbers, email addresses for some parents. Please email us any new co-ordinates so we can update our files.

l) New practicum student – We have a new student with us on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Senior Preschool room. Her name is Erin so if you see a new face on the playground it's Erin.

m) Parents who have things to sell would like to be able to share them with other parents. Therefore if you have items for sale, email the information to Mari along with contact information and she will incorporate the emails into one email. Once a month an email with a list of items for sale will be sent to all of you. It can be our own version of EBay but called GardenBay. We will put the submission deadline on the monthly calendar.

n) Mats for the cubby areas, stair landings and outside ramp were ordered one month ago and should be in any day now. This will cut down on wet floors, wet socks, etc.

A sincere thank you to those parents who came out to the parent meeting. We look forward to the opportunity to hear your thoughts and concerns. We hope to see you at our next meeting in April.