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Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Strathroy Library is undergoing a renovation to create an EarlyON Child and Family Centre. In 2018, the County of Middlesex was successful in applying for funds through the Provincial Community-Based EarlyON Child and Family Centre Capital Program (CBEP), receiving \$525,000 to complete a project in the Strathroy Library. The project will include the creation of two programming spaces in the library, as well as the construction of an accessible family washroom, a kitchenette for use in programs, and office space for staff and service partners.

The creation of dedicated EarlyON Child and Family Centre space in the library will allow for an expanded schedule of programs and services for Strathroy-Caradoc residents. EarlyON offers free programs for children (0-6 years old), their parents and caregivers. The Family Centre will create a space to engage and connect with others in the community, and a space for children to develop a sense of belonging. EarlyON professionals, with Early Childhood qualifications, provide support, advice and helpful resources. Parents and caregivers are a child's first teacher, and the EarlyON program exists to enrich their knowledge about early learning and development, and thereby support the developmental health and well-being of young children.

Currently, EarlyON programming in Strathroy takes place in the West Middlesex Arena one day per week, following the necessary COVID-19 protocols and restrictions. Upon completion of the project, the intent will be to transition programming to the new space, expanding the calendar of programs as it is safe to do so. "EarlyON programming is vital to our community, and we're thrilled to see this dedicated space established at the Strathroy Library," said Mayor Joanne Vanderheyden. "This project will expand learning opportunities for children and provide support to parents and caregivers close to home."

Now, more than ever, it is vital to invest in supports and services for children and families. "When the pandemic began in March, EarlyON staff quickly pivoted to supporting children and families in a virtual environment," explained Lindsay Brock, Director of Library Services for Middlesex County. "With a dedicated EarlyON space in Strathroy, staff are looking forward to providing more opportunities for in-person

programs and services to support the four foundations of learning: belonging, well-being, engagement and expression.”

The Strathroy Library will be closed from December 24-January 3. Curbside pickup service will resume Monday January 4, modified to reflect the current restrictions during the Provincial shutdown period. For up-to-date information on library services and hours, please check the library website at library.middlesex.ca.

Middlesex County Library gratefully acknowledges the support of the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada through the CBEP, and thanks them for this investment in the community of Strathroy-Caradoc.

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