

REPORT

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

To: Mayor W. Wright and Members of Council in Committee of the Whole Date: November 9, 2009

From: Lisa Spitale, Director of Development Services File: #118448

Subject: Child Care Protocol between the City of New Westminster and School District #40

RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse the Child Care Protocol as attached in this report.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the Child Care Protocol between the City of New Westminster and School District #40 (see attachment #1). This protocol will be presented by District staff to the School Board for its endorsement. If both parties endorse the protocol, then it will set a framework for closer collaboration.

SUMMARY

Quality, accessible and affordable child care produces significant social and economic benefits for New Westminster. From the City's perspective, child care enables parents to work and contribute to the local economy. It is also a major factor in the location and relocation decisions of families and businesses. From the School District's perspective, child care enables children to develop in all areas of child development and it facilitates school readiness and success.

This child care protocol recognizes that both the City and the School District have much to gain from working together to maintain existing and to develop new child care spaces within their collective control. In fact, this protocol is timely, given the development of three new schools in New Westminster and the possible development of an ECD Hub as part of the expansion to the Queensborough Community Centre. It also builds upon the work of the ECD Public Partners' Committee, in which the City and School District are both signatories to the Memorandum of Understanding.

BACKGROUND

The City and the School District do not operate child care spaces. Instead, they provide space and land to non-profit operators to provide licensed child care.

The City offers long-term, low-lease space to Queen's Park Preschool at the Centennial Lodge. On October 6, 2008, Council endorsed in principle a preliminary concept plan for an ECD Hub as part of the expansion to the Queensborough Community Centre. As proposed, this hub would include a licensed child care operation with close to 60 spaces. On February 16, 2009, Council endorsed in principle the Child Care Strategy for New Westminster, which among a number of recommendations, including the following:

- That a review of City-owned lands/buildings be conducted to identify and inventory sites/spaces that could reasonably accommodate child care facilities/programs.
- That consideration be given to building or incorporating space for child care facilities as part of the development of new municipal facilities and/or the major renovation to existing ones.

As such, while the City currently plays a very limited role with regard to the provision of space and land for child care purposes, it does foresee an expanded role in the future.

The School District leases space to Westminster Children's After School Society, which, in turn, operates 240 school age (before and after school) care spaces. It also provides land to the Lower Mainland Purpose Society, which, in turn, operates 36 group child care spaces. As such, the School District plays a major role in the provision of space and land for child care purposes.

Recently, the City and the School District have jointly worked on a proposal under the Province's Neighbourhoods of Learning Project. This proposal calls for group daycare facilities in all three schools and school age care in the elementary and middle schools, along with an ECD hub as part of the middle school.

EXISTING POLICY/PRACTICE

The Child Care Strategy for New Westminster includes the following recommendation:

- That a Child Care Protocol be developed whereby the City and School District jointly work to stabilize and increase the viability of existing child care programs so that there is no loss in spaces within their collective control and that they plan for and develop new child care spaces on City/School District lands and promote joint use of space.

The City and the School District both sit on the ECD Public Partners' Committee, which also includes Fraser Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, and the United Way of the Lower Mainland. In December 2008, all five organizations signed a Memorandum of Understanding to jointly work towards the development of four ECD hubs serving six neighbourhoods.

On September 29, 2009, the School Board endorsed the City's Child Care Strategy. School District staff are also bringing forth a 'Child Care Services in Schools' report for Board consideration and possible endorsement.

ANALYSIS

The City and School District operate many facilities and are major land owners. In fact, together they lease space and provide land to non-profit child care operators, which, in turn, operate close to 300 licensed spaces. This represents 36.5% of licensed group and school age care spaces in New Westminster. As such, maintaining these existing spaces is critical if progress is to be made to meeting the child care needs of residents of New Westminster.

This number of spaces could increase in the future, given the development of three new schools, which could incorporate licensed group and school age care facilities, and the expansion of the Queensborough Community Centre, which could incorporate an ECD Hub with close to 60 licensed group and school age care spaces. There may be additional opportunities, both as part of existing facilities and lands, and as part of new, expanded or renovated facilities.

As part of the Child Care Needs Assessment, which was endorsed by Council on October 27, 2008, there was support amongst parent child care survey respondents for locating child care facilities within schools and civic facilities. Regarding the former, it was felt that child care supports early learning and child development, while enabling parents to conveniently drop-off siblings of different ages for care and education purposes. As for the latter, it was felt that the co-location of child care facilities with other community and recreation uses, creates enhanced care environments (e.g., access to gymnasiums), while contributing to the development of 'inter-generational' community hubs

As such, the development of a protocol in which the importance of licensed child care is recognized; existing spaces are maintained and stabilized; new spaces are created; and senior government funding is realized, benefits the City, the School District and the community. It also demonstrates a commitment to collaborative planning, efficient use of resources and responsiveness to community needs.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Licensed child care operations within City facilities or on City-owned lands would be expected to cover the costs associated with their ongoing operation, including utility charges; janitorial services; replacement of equipment, furnishings and toys; and general grounds maintenance. They could also be required to make lease or rent payments to offset some of the costs associated with exterior maintenance.

OPTIONS

There are two options for Council's consideration; they are:

Option #1: That Council endorse the Child Care Protocol as included in this report.

Option #2: That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommend option #1.

CONCLUSION

This protocol would facilitate increased collaborative planning for child care purposes between the City and School District. It would also demonstrate the commitment of both parties to maintain and stabilize existing spaces, while working together towards creating new spaces. This collaboration and commitment would be well received by community members and by the senior levels of government, which would assist in grant requests and proposals, including the current one under the Neighbourhoods of Learning Project..

John Stark,
Senior Social Planner

Approved for Presentation to Council

Lisa Spitale,
Director of Development Services

Paul Daminato,
City Administrator

City of New Westminster

November 9, 2009

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Attachment #1:

Child Care Protocol between the City of New Westminster and School District #40

Purpose:

The City of New Westminster (the City) and School District No. 40 (SD #40) recognize that licensed child care is an essential community-based service and that it makes a significant contribution to the social and economic development of New Westminster. They also recognize that licensed child care is an investment in the future, as quality care is associated with improved child outcomes, including school readiness and success.

For the above reasons and others, the City and SD #40, as major landowners and operators of facilities, agree to work together under this Child Care Protocol to maintain, stabilize and increase the viability of existing licensed child care spaces within their collective control, and to plan for and develop, if feasible, new child care spaces on their collective lands. They also agree to advocate for increased senior government funding to develop a comprehensive child care system. A comprehensive child care system is one that includes the provision of quality programs that are accessible and affordable.

Objectives:

The City and SD #40 agree to work towards the following objectives:

- To maintain the existing number of licensed child care spaces (so that there is no loss of licensed child care spaces as a result of issues within their collective control).
- To stabilize existing child care spaces, including ensuring the provision of adequate, quality space and sustainable lease arrangements.
- To plan for and develop new child care spaces on their collective lands, if feasible, and to promote joint use of space for all types of licensed child care.
- To continue to participate on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Public Partners' Committee to develop four ECD hubs serving six neighbourhoods in New Westminster.
- To explore opportunities for licensed child care and early childhood development arising from the construction of new schools in New Westminster.
- To increase public awareness of the significant social and economic benefits associated with licensed child care and early childhood development.
- To advocate for increased senior government funding to develop a comprehensive child care system in New Westminster.

Rationale:

Quality, accessible and affordable child care provides significant social and economic benefits for the recipient community. Quality child care has a direct relationship to school readiness and success, parental support, literacy development, poverty reduction, and community engagement. Accessible and affordable child care also enables parents to work and contribute to the local economy; alleviates dependence on income assistance; and is a major factor in the location and relocation decisions of both families and businesses. Research suggests that for every dollar spent on high-quality early childhood development and care, there is a two dollar pay off to society (Cleveland and Krashinsky, 1998).

While the funding and regulation of licensed child care is primarily a Provincial government responsibility, the City, SD #40 and other community shareholders can play an important role in the planning, development, monitoring and coordination of child care.

Although the City and SD #40 do not directly provide licensed child care, they do support non-profit societies and/or associations to deliver quality, accessible and affordable child care within their facilities and on their grounds. They can also work together to create a more focused, comprehensive and integrated approach in supporting existing child care spaces and creating new ones.

Background:

The impetus for this Child Care Protocol came from the City of New Westminster's Child Care Strategy (February 16, 2009). This strategy provides an overall framework and long-term direction with regard to child care in New Westminster. The report recognizes the importance of school-based, licensed child care facilities to meeting the child care needs of parents and students and it recommends the need for more collaborative planning related to child care between the City and SD #40.

The strategy contains the following recommendation:

That a Child Care Protocol be developed whereby the City and SD #40 jointly work to stabilize and increase the viability of existing child care programs so that there is no loss in spaces within their collective control and that they plan for and develop new child care spaces on City/School District lands and promote joint use of space.

On September 29, 2009, the School Board also endorsed the Child Care Strategy.

Regarding moving forward, much of the groundwork has already been laid, as both the City and SD #40 participate on the ECD Public Partners' Committee, along with Fraser Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the United Way of the Lower Mainland. This committee is working to develop four ECD hubs serving six neighbourhoods in New Westminster.

Guiding Principles:

The City and SD #40, under this Child Care Protocol, will be guided by the following principles:

Quality: *Quality child care is child care which supports the child's emotional, intellectual, physical and social development and assists and complements the family in its child-rearing role. Research and experience indicate that the predictors of quality programming include: the existence of and compliance with licensing standards; the provision of specific staff training in child development and early childhood education; the effective administration of the programs; the involvement of parents in the care option of their choice; and the provision of sufficient operating funds and program resources to support care that is developmentally and individually appropriate.*

Accessibility: Accessible child care is child care in which there is appropriate and adequate capacity for all families and children who require it. This means an integrated continuum of services for children from birth to 12 years of age in developmentally appropriate programs for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and elementary school-aged children; the planning, coordination and delivery of child care services at the neighbourhood level; the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services; and the development of physically accessible facilities that promote the full inclusion of all children.

Affordability: Affordable child care is child care which provides access to quality care for all families regardless of income. It is adequately funded by senior levels of government and offers subsidies to families to make up the difference between their ability to pay and the actual cost of child care.