NEW WESTMINSTER







Child Care Needs Assessment

October 27, 2008

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Child Care Needs Assessment for New Westminster

Table of Contents

	Executive Summary	4
1	Introduction	6
2	Background	7
3	Definition and Types	8
4	Importance	11
5	Provision and Funding	13
6	Existing Policy and Practice	16
7	Relation to Other Initiatives	17
8	Community Consultation	20
9	Current Child Care Situation	22
10	Issue Identification and Analysis	28
	Appendices	33

Executive Summary

City Council has communicated its desire to become a municipal leader in the area of child care and to make child care one of its corporate priorities. To this end, it has funded a new Child Care Strategy, which includes this Needs Assessment, and has included child care as one of the possible beneficiaries of its new density bonusing policy. It has also recognized the economic importance of child care and directed the City's Economic Development Manager to include child care within his mandated responsibilities.

Child care, which is often perceived as a social issue, has significant economic implications for the future prosperity of New Westminster. It enables parents to work and to contribute to the local economy; it alleviates dependence on income assistance; and it facilitates early childhood development and later school success which is vital to developing a skilled workforce for the future. It is also a major factor in the location and relocation decisions of both families and businesses and is a key determinant in recruiting and retaining parent employees.

It has been over a decade since the City last commissioned an assessment of the child care situation within New Westminster. During this time, the Federal and Provincial governments have reduced their funding commitments and there have been increasing requests for municipal leadership and assistance. As such, municipalities throughout Metro Vancouver have become far more active and involved in this area. Despite their efforts, demand continues to far outstrip supply and the current child care situation can best be described as being in crisis.

The City of New Westminster is not immune from the above situation. Currently, the vast majority of child care providers are operating at capacity with most maintaining lengthy wait lists. For infant/toddler and out-of-school care, wait times for a placement are often measured in years. Demand far outstrips supply in all sub-areas of the City but is particularly acute in the Downtown and Queensborough. These two sub-areas, which are receiving the majority of growth and development, are already under-resourced, having 7.5% and 4.9% of the total child care spaces in the City respectively.

Child care is the most overlooked economic development opportunity in the City. If we are trying to entice businesses and skilled workers, then we must address their child care needs. We are in competition with other municipalities throughout the region and this is one way that we can achieve a competitive advantage.

Child Care Interviewee, 2008

We need to work though the Union of BC Municipalities and other bodies to ensure that child care is a priority and that all three levels of government are working to improve its provision and delivery.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

The cost of child care and the lack of flexible arrangements are issues. Based on a questionnaire of 428 parents in New Westminster, 15% of respondents reported that the cost of child care was a limiting factor in securing a placement. As such, cost ranked third behind availability (30%) and quality (17%). As for flexibility, no regulated child care providers offer non-traditional hours in New Westminster. For parents who work evenings, holidays, shifts or weekends, most rely on informal or unregulated care arrangements. In fact, 51% of questionnaire respondents reported that the lack of suitable, including flexible, child care arrangements limited their ability to work.

The sustainability of existing child care spaces and the suitability of child care facilities to meet future program needs are also issues. Based on a questionnaire of child care operators in New Westminster, 46% of respondents reported that their current tenure arrangements are insecure or relatively insecure and 6% of respondents reported that their facility is in need of major building upgrades. As such, this translates to 348 and 75 child care spaces respectively, which is about 35% of the total number of child care spaces in the City. Additionally, 55% of respondents reported that their current building or space does not meet their program's future needs.

The Province is considering introducing full-day Kindergarten in 2009 or 2010 and optional pre-Kindergarten for four and three year olds in subsequent years. If these changes are implemented, it will have major implications for the child care system in New Westminster and the Child Care Needs Assessment and Strategy. For example, the demand for out-of-school care will significantly increase, while the demand for child care serving children three to five years old, Kindercare and pre-school care will decrease.

While the gaps and needs are great, there are a number of positive developments and opportunities in which to build upon. New Westminster Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee and the Public Partners ECD Committee are working to develop four ECD hubs, anchored by child care, in New Westminster. Regarding the latter, a Memorandum of Understanding was recently signed between the City, Fraser Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the School District and the United Way of the Lower Mainland to jointly work toward hub development. The City also has an opportunity to show its leadership and commitment by making child care part of the future expansion of the Queensborough Community Centre and the development of the new Downtown Civic Multi-Use Facility.

This Needs Assessment, and the issues identified within it, document the need for a new Child Care Policy and Strategy; one which will provide the direction and tools necessary to build a sound and sustainable child care system in New Westminster. For this to occur, the City will have to be proactive and innovative, while facilitating partnership arrangements. It will also have to work with other municipalities and umbrella organizations to ensure that the senior levels of government, which have the primary responsibility for child care, adequately fund this vital service.



1 Introduction

A new child care strategy is long overdue. Prior to developing it, we need to better understand the current situation. What are the needs and where are they located? Only then, can we ensure that our interventions will have the desired effect. All too often, we jump to solutions without understanding the needs.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

This report provides an overview of the child care system and a snapshot of the current child care situation within the City of New Westminster. More specifically, it defines what is meant by child care and describes the different types; details its importance from both a social and an economic perspective; discusses how it is provided and funded and outlines the City's current role; examines the existing child care situation, including supply and demand factors; and identifies and analyzes a number of related issues.

The information gathering and consultation took place between November 2007 and June 2008. Where possible, the most current information is used, including 2006 Census data. Regarding the latter, given that Census data is often released several years after its collection, some information is not yet available by sub-area. YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral also provided information related to child care statistics and referrals. The consultation is extensively based on two questionnaires, which involved 428 parents and 34 child care operators, and a major child care forum which was attended by over 75 people.

The purposes of the overview and snapshot are many and include:

- to consolidate child care information into one source in order to make it easier to access and use;
- to make a strong case for investing in child care from both a social and an economic perspective;
- to document gaps and needs, including by sub-area;
- to identify issues that need to be addressed;
- to inform the development of the City's new Child Care Policy and Strategy;
- to provide benchmark information in order to evaluate progress in addressing gaps, needs and issues.

As with any overview and snapshot, it quickly becomes out-of-date. To ensure its currency and reliability, one of the recommended actions within the Child Care Strategy is to establish an Implementation Group. This body, with the assistance of the City's Social Planner, will periodically review and update the needs assessment information; prepare an annual report on progress in addressing gaps, needs and issues; and work to raise public awareness about the importance of and need for child care.

This report was informed by and informs several other documents. These documents are:

- the Child Care Needs Assessment Companion Document, which contains complete consultation results;
- the Child Care Policy and Strategy, which defines the City's role and responsibilities in the area of child care and recommends a number of actions which are designed to support existing and facilitate the provision of new child care spaces;
- the Guide to Establishing a New Child Care Facility in the City of New Westminster, which provides direction as to the procedure and steps involved.

2 Background

It has been over a decade since the completion of the City of New Westminster's "Caring for Children" Child Care Strategy (1995). During this time, the planning context in which the strategy was based has changed.

The Federal and Provincial governments are not as active in this area as in the past and there are increasing requests for municipal leadership and assistance. The demand for licensed child care is also far outstripping supply, which means that more and more children find themselves in unregulated child care arrangements. Given the importance of child care, both from a social and an economic perspective, this lack of licensed child care is threatening the City's high quality of life and its future prosperity.

In this context, City Council decided that it was time to prepare a new Child Care Strategy; one which will define the City's role and responsibilities in relation to the senior levels of government; recommend policies and tools to support existing and facilitate the provision of new child care spaces; identify potential funding and partnership arrangements; and establish child care targets by which the strategy can be regularly monitored and evaluated.



As a two-income family with a young child, this is the most important issue that we face. If we want to continue living in New Westminster, we need to be able to find quality daycare. I am three months into my maternity leave and I am frantically trying to find an available space. Instead of enjoying the time with my newborn child, I am beating on doors and becoming more anxious with each passing day.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

3 Definition and Types

Child care refers to the care of children under 12 years of age by adults who are not their parents. While child care is primarily used by working parents, there are different types of care that enable stay-at-home parents to also use these services.

In British Columbia, there are two basic types of child care: licensed and license-not-required. Licensed child care includes family child care, multi-age child care, group child care, preschool care, out-of-school care and occasional child care. Licensed establishments must adhere to Provincial legislation and requirements in order to maintain their licenses. Regulations include everything from building code to safety requirements, criminal record checks for staff and minimum staff/child ratios. These establishments are also subject to regular inspections. For these reasons and others, licensed establishments are the preferred child care option.

License-not-required includes informal, private care that occurs within a child's home or at the home of a caregiver such as a family member or friend. Under BC law, a caregiver who looks after more than two children not related to him or her must have a license. Regardless of the law, a large percentage of children are cared for in unlicensed, unregulated arrangements with more than two children not related to the caregiver.

With each licensing category are rules that govern the number of children, the number of adults, the physical space requirements and the educational level required of staff. The specific details can be found in the Community Care and Assisted Living Act.

Types of Licensed Child Care

Family Child Care

Licensed family child care is offered in a caregiver's own home and serves children from newborn to 12 years. The caregiver sets the hours; however, most provide full-day care. Part-time spaces and flexible hours may be available in some settings. The maximum number of children is seven, with different age requirements depending on if there is a child younger than 12 months old present or not. If yes, then there can be no more than three children younger than 48 months old and, of those three, no more than one child younger than 12 months old. If no, then there can be no more than four children younger than 48 months old and, of those four, no more than two children younger than 24 months old.



When I got pregnant, my friends told me to start thinking about daycare. After the birth of my son, I started to call around. It is pretty distressing when you hear that we are full and that we have a wait time of more than a year. I am on several waitlists but don't have a space. I have already told my employer that I may have to extend my maternity leave.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

In-Home and Multi-Age Child Care

This licensing category raises the maximum number of children from seven to eight. As with family child care, there are different age requirements depending on if there is a child younger than 12 months old present or not. If yes, then there can be no more than three children younger than 36 months old and, of those three, no more than one child younger than 12 months old. If no, then there can be no more than three children younger than 36 months old. The licensee must be certified as an educator.



Group Child Care Centres

Group child care centres serve children either from newborn to 36 months (also known as infant/toddler care) or from 30 months to school age. Centres offer year-round, full-day care, typically opening between 7:00 and 8:00 a.m. and closing between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. Part-time spaces are available in some settings; as is on-site Kindergarten or before and after Kindergarten care for five year olds.

The maximum group size is 12 for children under 36 months, with a separate area designated for each group. The maximum group size is 25 for children over 30 months to school age, with not more than two children younger than 36 months old in a single group. For the minimum staff/child ratio in each group, refer to Appendix 1.

Preschools

Preschools serve children from 30 months to school age. Some provide separate sessions for three and four years olds while others serve mixed age groups. Preschools are part-day programs (four hours maximum) and some require that parents participate in the program. Most preschools operate on the school year – i.e., September to June.

The maximum group size is 20 children with a minimum staff/child ratio of one Early Childhood Educator for 10 children and one Early Childhood Educator and one Assistant for 20 children.

Out-of-School Care Centres

School age (out-of-school) care centres serve school age children who require care outside regular school hours. Some provide care before and after school while others provide care only after school. Centres provide full-day care on days when school is not in session and most offer a full-day summer program. Some also offer before and after Kindergarten care.

The maximum group size is 20 if any pre-school child or child in Grade 1 is present and 25 if no pre-school or child in Grade 1 is present. Regarding the former, the minimum staff/child ratio is one responsible adult for 10 or fewer children and two responsible adults for 11 to 20 children. As for the latter, the minimum staff/child ratio is one responsible adult for 15 or fewer children and two responsible adults for 16 to 25 children. A responsible adult is 19 years of age and has completed a course, or combination of courses, of at least 20 hours duration in child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition.

The child care system is not user friendly. There are multiple points of access and different requirements depending on the care type. Many parents lack the knowledge and sophistication to navigate the system. This is particularly true for new Canadians. We need to better educate parents as to their options and be prepared to step them through the system in order to improve outcomes.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

Occasional Child Care

Occasional child care replaces child minding and emergency child care, which are being phased out under the new legislation. The latter types of care have until November 2009 to become compliant with the new legislation. Under occasional child care, occasional or short-term care is provided to pre-school children who are at least 18 months old and to each child for no more than 40 hours in a calendar month. The maximum number of children is 16 if any child present is younger than 36 months old and 20 if no child present is younger that 30 months old. For minimum staff/child ratios, refer to Appendix 1.

Registered/Regulated License-Not-Required Family Child Care Programs

License-not-required family child care programs provide care for not more than two children at a given time who are unrelated to the caregiver by blood or marriage. Care is provided in the caregiver's own home and the caregiver must go through a registration process with his or her local Child Care Resource and Referral.

Profiles

The Community Care and Assisted Living Act and the Child Care Licensing Regulation define required staff/child ratios, group sizes, health and safety measures, and early childhood educator training requirements for various child care settings. For information, go to:
http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/reg/C/CommuCareAssisted/332_2007.htm



4 Importance

As cited in the City of New Westminster's Official Community Plan (1998), "child care is an essential community-based service." While child care is typically seen as a social issue, there is an increasing body of evidence that speaks to the economic importance of child care. In fact, more and more municipalities are including policies on accessible, affordable and quality child care within their economic development strategies.

Social Benefits

High quality child care provides opportunities for children to develop in all areas of child development. Children have opportunities to learn how to get along with others and to learn new skills in a safe and nurturing setting. These positive early childhood experiences have been found to enhance school readiness and later school success. They have also been found to reduce differences in developmental vulnerability across neighbourhoods, when taking into account parental education and style, family income and neighbourhood socio-economic characteristics.

Parents of children in high quality child care settings are afforded opportunities to learn about different developmental and parenting issues. Together, parents and qualified staff can address concerns about challenges that may arise during the child's development in order that interventions can be incorporated. Parents also develop strong social support networks with other parents. These networks reduce social isolation, especially for single parents, and are often used to secure informal care and information outside of regular child care hours.

High quality child care has also been shown to assist in the settlement and integration process for recent immigrants and refugees. Child care offers opportunities for language learning and cultural integration for children and parents alike. It also offers opportunities for parents to build social support networks with other parents, including parents who are well connected within the community. These opportunities can enhance school readiness and later school success for young children and can assist their parents in finding employment or housing.

Economic Benefits

High quality child care is an important consideration in attracting and retaining women within the labour force. Given the aging of the population and the looming labour shortage in Canada, female participation in the labour force will become increasingly important. In 2003, 21% of Canadian women aged 25 to 44 worked part-time with over a third of them reporting that they did so due to a lack of affordable, quality child care. In New Westminster, 47% of parent respondents to a recent child care questionnaire

I am dependent upon my aging mother to provide care. She cares for my two children three days per week. While she doesn't complain, I am sure that this is not her idea of retirement. What happens when she is no longer able to provide care? As a single mother with a part-time job and two children, I would have to go on welfare.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

reported that they had difficulty finding suitable child care. Of these respondents, 61% reported that the lack of suitable child care limited their ability to work or to find work.

Two income families are becoming a necessity given increasing housing costs within Metro Vancouver. In fact, the average MLS selling price for a single family home in New Westminster was $389,900 in 2006 and $479,900 in 2007; a 23% increase between 2006 and 2007. Qualifying household income to purchase such a home in 2007 was $110,840. The average rent for a two-bedroom apartment in New Westminster was $863 in 2006 (the latest year in which this information is available). Qualifying household income to rent such an apartment in 2006 was $34,520. As such, home ownership is all but out-of-reach for single income families and rental housing requires two earners if both are making minimum wage or slightly above.

Families with young children are reluctant to leave communities where they have access to high quality child care or establish in ones where they are unable to secure it. Additionally, businesses consider the availability of child care in their expansion and relocation decisions, as it impacts on worker productivity. In a Health Canada study, which examined the costs of work-life conflict in Canada, it was found that employers reported that the availability of early childhood development programs, including child care, was critical to the recruitment and retention of their parent employees. It was also found to reduce worker absenteeism and stress among parent employees; two factors which negatively impact worker productivity.

Profiles

Kathleen McCartney, in her article "Current Research on Child Care Effects" (2004), found that "children who experience high-quality child care have higher scores on achievement and language tests and show better social skills and fewer behavioural problems."

The Business Roundtable and Corporate Voices for Working Families (2003) emphasized that "high-quality early childhood education produces long-term positive outcomes and cost-savings that include improved school performance, reduced special education placement, lower school drop-out rates and increased lifelong earning potential." In a joint statement of principles, the Roundtable stated that "employers increasingly find that the availability of good early childhood programs is critical to the recruitment and retention of parent employees."

Child care is undervalued in our society. It is seen as a social issue which only impacts a small segment of the population. What many fail to realize is that child care is as much an economic issue. Child care enables parents to work and to contribute to the local economy. It alleviates dependence on income assistance. It also contributes to early childhood development and later school success, which is vital to developing a skilled workforce for the future.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

5 Provision and Funding

Despite the importance of licensed child care, both from a social and an economic perspective, it has been under-funded by the senior levels of government for many years. In most municipalities, including New Westminster, demand far outstrips supply for all types of licensed child care. In fact, wait times are often measured in years. For parents who cannot locate or afford licensed child care, many find themselves dependent on unregulated child care arrangements, which may place their children at risk from a development, health and safety perspective.

While the Provincial government is primarily responsible for child care, many municipalities, in response to the growing need, have become more active in this area. Municipal responses range from lobbying the senior levels of government to facilitating partnerships to implementing permissive zoning to offering favourable lease rates to providing grants. Additionally, many municipalities have reviewed or are in the process of reviewing their role and responsibilities in this area, given that it is a Provincial responsibility and given their limited resources and taxation powers.

Federal Government

In January 2007, the Federal government announced the elimination of the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreement effective March 31, 2007. For BC, this loss translated into $455 million dollars over a three-year period. The ELCC was an agreement between the Federal Liberal government and the BC government, signed in September 2005, with the goal of making the early years a funding priority. As a result, the Federal portion of BC's Child Care Operating Funding Program was terminated, which had provided an average of $40 per month per child to child care providers to offset costs.



We are witnessing a crisis and the finger pointing must stop. Governments must work together to provide leadership and solutions. If not, we will all be the losers.

Child Care Forum Participant, 2008

While I appreciate the subsidy, it doesn't come close to covering my child care costs. To cover my portion, I must scrimp on clothing, food and housing. I am working but I find myself more and more in debt.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

In place of the ELCC, the Federal government instituted the Universal Child Care Benefit (UCCB) which is given directly to families. Under this program, all families can apply to receive $100 per month (taxable) per child under the age of six. Additional funding is available for some families through the Canada Child Tax Benefit and the Child Disability Benefit. Regarding the latter two programs, funding is dependent upon the number of children and family income.



In the budget announcement of March 19, 2007, the Federal government announced that in addition to the $1,200 per child per year under UCCB, it will transfer $250 million to the provinces and territories for the creation of early learning and child care spaces for the 2007/08 fiscal year.

Provincial Government

The Provincial government provides financial support to child care providers in three ways:

1. The Child Care Operating Funding Program
2. The Child Care Capital Funding Program
3. The Child Care Resource and Referral Program

The Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) Program is intended to assist eligible licensed group and family child care providers with the cost of providing care. Funding amounts are dependent on enrollment (see appendix #2). In a letter issued on March 16, 2007, Linda Reid, Minister of State for Child Care, outlined that $40 million will be made available to CCOF funded child cares.

The Child Care Capital Funding Program provides financial support for child care under two separate programs:

- The Major Capital Funding Program is intended to create new child care spaces. Capital funding is available for both non-profit and private sector organizations. Targeted capital funding provides additional incentives to create child care spaces in high need areas and in unused public spaces, as well as for organizations co-locating services to create community hubs. The latest application deadlines have passed, with no successful applicants from New Westminster, and no decision has been made regarding future funding under this program.
- The Minor Capital Funding Program is intended to assist licensed, group, non-profit child care providers to meet licensing requirements related to repairing or upgrading existing facilities, replacing equipment and furnishings, or assisting with moving costs. Eligible child care providers can receive a maximum funding amount of $5,000 per project. If a child care provider operates more than one license care type at a facility, the maximum funding amount is $10,000 per facility.

For more information, go to:
http://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare

The challenge will be to retain existing child care spaces. Many operators are struggling to survive given low profit margins, staffing difficulties and uncertain lease arrangements. All levels of government must do more if we are to create an accessible, quality and sustainable child care system.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

The Child Care Resource and Referral Program offers child care providers and families a range of services in all communities in BC, including:

- referrals to child care providers;
- resource and toy lending library services;
- training and workshops;
- distribution of child care information and newsletters;
- home support visits for child care providers;
- telephone, office and outreach support and consultation.

For more information, go to:
http://www.childcarechoices.ca



The Provincial government, through the Ministry of Children and Family Development, also offers some families subsidies to help cover the cost of child care. In total, the Province has committed $126 million per year to this program.

Families who have children with special needs may also receive services from Supported Child Development agencies. The Provincial government has committed $54 million per year to these programs. These agencies provide support for children 0 to 12 years old in order that they can participate in regular child care settings.

Table 1, below, shows that 648 children (494 families) in New Westminster were in receipt of a full or partial Child Care Subsidy or Special Needs Supplement in 2007/08.

Profiles

In an October 2004 report released by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Canada's child care system was described as a chronically under-funded patchwork of programs.

Table #1: Children and Families Receiving a Subsidy or Supplement in New Westminster[1]

Subsidy	2006/07		2007/08	
	Children	Families	Children	Families
Full Child Care Subsidy	570	428	520	417
Partial Child Care Subsidy	273	211	292	219
Special Needs Supplement	31	26	33	28
Total	**678**	**502**	**648**	**494**

[1] Since a child (family) can receive a full and partial Subsidy and a Special Needs Supplement at the same time, the sum of the counts of children (families) receiving a full or partial Subsidy and a Special Needs Supplement does not equal the total number of children (families) receiving a Subsidy.

6 Existing Policy and Practice

The City of New Westminster's "Official Community Plan" (1998) states that the City should:

- encourage the provision of child care as an essential community-based service;
- promote child care within the City by facilitating partnerships with the community;
- consider the provision of child care in the context of neighbourhood planning by evaluating the need for child care in proposed developments.

The City has been facilitating child care and early childhood development in the following ways:

- offering long-term, low-rate lease of space to Queen's Park Preschool at Centennial Lodge;
- providing child minding and tiny tot playtime through the Parks and Recreation Department;[2]
- permitting group child care facilities of up to 16 children (subject to certain conditions) in the Neighbourhood Residential Dwelling Districts (NR-2) zone in the Connaught, Kelvin and West End neighbourhoods;
- amending the Zoning Bylaw to allow licensed family child care homes to locate in residential districts;
- using Comprehensive Development zoning to facilitate the development of group child care centres in residential districts;
- using developer contributions which enable an applicant to achieve additional floor space or more units per acre than permitted under existing zoning in exchange for child care spaces;
- using development variance permits to enable a small amount of the required parking spaces for an existing commercial building to be converted to outdoor play space in order to meet Provincial licensing requirements for child care operations in the Downtown;
- lobbying the senior levels of governments for increased funding to develop new child care spaces;
- participating on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee and the Public Partners ECD Committee which are working to develop four ECD hubs serving six neighbourhoods in New Westminster.

Profiles

The purpose of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee is to work collectively to plan, develop and provide opportunities for children o to 6 years and their families; to promote positive relationships, partnerships and supports within the community; and to oversee the development and implementation of the ECD Strategic Plan. The Public Partners ECD Committee has a more narrowly defined mandate, with its primary purpose being to coordinate planning and to identify and access funding and other resources in support of developing four ECD hubs.

Several Councillors have stated that they want the City to be a leader in this area. If so, then the City will have to do far more than it is doing now. Based on what other municipalities are doing, we have a lot of catching up to do.

Child Care Forum Participant, 2008

[2] Child minding is offered at Centennial Community Centre and four tiny tot playtimes targeting children between the ages of three and five are also offered by Parks and Recreation. The latter are a recreational preschool program.

7 Relation to Other Initiatives

The preparation of a new Child Care Strategy is timely as it will benefit from and inform a number of other related initiatives, including:

Early Childhood Development Hubs

In 2004, the New Westminster Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee developed a Five-Year Strategic Action Plan (2004/09), with a key strategic priority being ECD hub development and partnership building.[3]

The above plan envisions four hubs serving six neighbourhoods in New Westminster. The four hubs are as follows: the East Hub (Queen's Park and Sapperton); the Queensborough Hub; the Uptown/Downtown Hub; and the West Hub (Connaught Heights and Tweedsmuir). With funding support from the Ministry of Children and Family Development, planning for two of the four hubs is well underway.

Regarding the Queensborough Hub, the community consultation phase has been completed and an Action Team has been established. This body has been working with an architect to identify possible hub components and space requirements. Based on this work, a preliminary concept plan has been developed that would see a 7,200 square foot addition to the Queensborough Community Centre. This addition could accommodate a variety of early childhood development and family strengthening programs, including a licensed child care centre. As proposed, this centre could include 12 infant/toddler spaces, 25 three to five spaces and 20 out-of-school spaces. The proposed timeframe for the expansion of the Queensborough Community Centre is 2011 to 2013.

Regarding the Uptown/Downtown Hub, an Action Team has been established and the community consultation phase has been completed and a report produced. This report does not recommend a specific site but it does emphasize the importance of working with the various levels of government and the private sector to explore the merits of a hub within new developments. It also emphasizes the importance of a hub being part of a civic precinct to provide for a variety of family activities and to foster intergenerational and social interaction. Regarding new civic developments within the area in question, planning has commenced for a new civic multi-use facility and community and recreational spaces in the Downtown. As such, it will be important to ensure that hub development is considered.

For more information, go to:
http://www.kidsnewwest.ca

Early Childhood Development Mapping Project

The Human Early Learning Partnership has completed an Early Childhood Development Mapping Project for New Westminster. A key component of the project is the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which is a research tool that assesses the state of a child's development in Kindergarten.

The EDI is a checklist that Kindergarten teachers complete for each child in their class after they have known that student for several months. It measures a child's development in the following five domains:

- social competence;
- physical health and wellbeing;
- emotional maturity;
- language and cognitive development;
- communication skills and general knowledge.

An overall composite score of the five above areas is also reported.

[3] A hub is an integrated, local facility, anchored by child care, from which all programs, services and supports for early childhood development can be accessed.

While I think we are making progress, I am concerned about the direction we may be headed. While we have healed many of the rifts between child care and early learning, recent Provincial announcements around full-day Kindergarten and Strong Start Centres will once again open up old wounds. We need to recognize that high quality child care incorporates early learning and promotes child development.

Child Care Interviewee, 2008

Each EDI domain is scored somewhere between 0 and 10. At the completion of the first round of data collection, a provincial range of scores is established for each domain. The vulnerability threshold (or cut-off) is the EDI score that distinguishes the bottom 10% of children from the other 90%. Children who fall below that score are said to be vulnerable on that domain of development.

New Westminster has completed two waves of EDI data collection. Wave 1 was completed from 2001 to 2004 and wave 2 was completed from 2005 to 2007. Based on the results, 33.3% of children were vulnerable on at least one domain of their development in wave 1 and 29.8% of children were vulnerable on at least one domain of their development in wave 2; a decrease of 3.5%. For the most recent wave, the highest proportion of children vulnerable in at least one domain was in Queensborough (48.5%) and the lowest proportion of children vulnerable in at least one domain was in Queen's Park (18.4%). The other four neighbourhood groupings fell within this range.

The EDI data can inform the location, type and size of new child care facilities and programs, as it provides information related to disparities and needs. Given that licensed child care addresses all five domains of child development, it can be an important resource in reducing vulnerability and readying children for school entry and later success.

For more information, go to:
http://www.earlylearning.ubc.ca/

Strong Start Centres

Based, in part, on the above EDI data, the Provincial government is now funding the development of Strong Start Centres throughout the Province. These centres, one of which is housed at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School in Queensborough, allow parents and caregivers to drop-in with their children for learning activities for up to three hours per day during the week. The purpose of the centres is to ready children for Kindergarten, while providing parents and caregivers with the resources to support their children's learning at home.

While Strong Start Centres will assist in readying children for Kindergarten, it should be noted that these centres do not provide child care, as the parent or caregiver must be present, and they are not available during times when working families can access them. Additionally, some concern has been expressed that these centres may displace school-based child care programs, including out-of-school care, especially in School Districts like New Westminster with steady or increasing enrollment.

For more information, go to:
http://www.learnnowbc.ca/Parent_Information_Centre/EarlyLearning/StrongStartCentres.aspx

Full-Day Kindergarten

The BC Ministry of Education is currently studying the feasibility of offering full-day Kindergarten for 2009, with optional pre-Kindergarten for four-year olds by 2010 and three-year olds by 2012. The study is a response to provincial EDI data which shows that about one-quarter of children who arrive at Kindergarten are not developmentally ready. While research findings indicate that children who have participated in preschool and full-day Kindergarten experience positive outcomes in their academic and social-emotional development, concerns have been raised about the highly structured, academic nature of such programs, especially for three and four years olds. [4]

Full-day Kindergarten and optional kindergarten for three and four years olds, if implemented, will have

[4] Early Childhood Development Agency. Expanding Early Learning in British Columbia for Children Aged 3-5: A Consultation Paper. Victoria: BC Ministry of Education, June 2008.



a major impact on the child care system, potentially decreasing the demand for child care for three to five year olds and significantly increasing the demand for out-of-school care. It also has the potential to displace school-based child care programs, including out-of-school care, especially in School Districts like New Westminster with steady or increasing enrollment.

For more information, go to:
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/ecla/

Understanding the Early Years

Understanding the Early Years (UEY) is a national initiative that enables members of communities across Canada to better understand the needs of their families and young children so that they can determine the best programs and services to meet those needs. New Westminster is a UEY community with the Lower Mainland Purpose Society acting as the host agency. To date, considerable socio-economic data has been collected and mapped. This data, particularly when layered one on top of another, provides information about factors that impact early childhood development such as education, housing and income. Asset mapping is also occurring. Together, the composite information and maps identify potential needs and service gaps.

The UEY data can inform the location, type and size of new child care facilities and programs, as it provides information related to disparities, needs and gaps.

For more information, go to:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/hip/sd/300_UEYInfo.shtml

Middle Childhood Initiative

The New Westminster Inter-Agency Council (NWIAC) hosted Jeff Calbick of the United Way of the Lower Mainland (UWLM), to provide an overview of the Middle Childhood (ages 6 to 12) Initiative of UWLM. He stated that projects are underway in four communities, with the goal of developing a community plan and setting priorities. Based on the presentation, the NWIAC decided to establish a Middle Childhood Action Team under the direction of the Early Childhood Development Committee.

This Team, with funding support from the UWLM, recently retained the services of a consultant to bring together a diverse range of stakeholders who work with children ages 6 to 12 and their families around research, enhanced cooperation and local planning. The initial step of the work will be to develop a common understanding of the scope of the project and to consult with children and their families. This consultation will identify assets, needs and gaps which will inform policy development and service provision.

In addition to the above work, the Human Early Learning Partnership is also developing a Middle Years Development Index. This survey tool will allow for the assessment of Grades 4 and 7 students in order to provide information on how these students are doing. In this way, communities can monitor how children are doing through the elementary school years and implement supports to assist children in their development. The initial indications are that this survey tool could be applied in School District #40 as early as 2009/10.

The Middle Childhood and Middle Years Development Index data can inform the location, type and size of child care facilities and programs for children aged 6 to 12, as it provides information related to disparities, needs and gaps.

For more information, go to:
http://www.uwlm.ca/How+We+Work/Children+6-12/MCM.htm

8 Community Consultation

Community consultation was seen as being integral to the development of the new Child Care Strategy. As such, every effort was made to provide opportunities for child care operators, parents and community members to have input into its development.

These efforts included two questionnaires, a major child care resource fair and forum and a series of focus groups, the latter of which reached out to isolated and marginalized community members. In total, over 600 people participated in the consultation process over a six-month period.

Child Care Strategy Task Group

A Child Care Strategy Task Group was established to guide and inform strategy development. This task group had a broad membership, including child care operators and parents, the City, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the School District, the Simon Fraser Society for Community Living, and YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral. In total, there were over 20 members and the task group met on a monthly basis starting in November 2007.

Child Care Questionnaire for Parents

A child care questionnaire for parents was prepared and widely distributed. This questionnaire was designed to gather information about the kinds of child care arrangements that are currently being used, the ease or difficulty in finding a placement and the level of satisfaction with that placement, as well as suggestions to improve access to and increase the availability of child care. Respondents could complete the questionnaire for more than one child.

Over 1,900 child care questionnaires for parents were distributed. This distribution included 417 questionnaires to parents of Kindergarten students in School District #40; 615 questionnaires to parents of children in licensed child care facilities; 75 questionnaires to parents attending New West Family Place; and 825 questionnaires available at municipal facilities throughout New Westminster.

In total, 428 questionnaires were completed and returned, which represented a return ratio of 22.2%. This is a high return ratio given the methodology employed and this speaks to the importance of child care for parents with young children. These 428 questionnaires represented the child care needs of 732 children between the ages of 0 and 12. The goal was to have 300 questionnaires completed and returned.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire

A child care operator questionnaire was prepared and distributed to all licensed child care facilities in New Westminster. This questionnaire was designed to gather information about the type of building in which the program is located, the building's ability to meet current and future program requirements, the building's tenure arrangements and their security, and the license type and the number of spaces provided, as well as suggestions to improve access to and increase the availability of child care.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the questionnaire. We know that there are major problems with regard to the existing child care resources in the City; however, we have not had the facts to back up our assertions. Before we develop new child care spaces, we have to ensure that the foundation upon which these new spaces are being built is solid. From my perspective, it is crumbling and in need of major repair.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

Fifty-four child care operator questionnaires were distributed; of which five were returned unopened. As such, of the 49 questionnaires that reached their destination, 34 were completed and returned for a return ratio of 69.4%. The goal was to have a return ratio of 70% or higher.

Child Care Resource Fair and Forum

A child care resource fair and forum was held on February 23, 2008. This event was designed to provide child care information for parents and results related to the above two questionnaires. It was also designed to provide a forum for the sharing of best practices related to municipal child care policies and tools. Regarding the latter, representatives from the Cities of North Vancouver, Richmond and Vancouver and the District of North Vancouver made presentations and the social planner for the City of Burnaby prepared a summary document for distribution to participants. Based on the presentations, follow-up case study research was conducted to determine the applicability of a number of the cited best practices to the City of New Westminster.

Over 75 people attended the child care resource fair and forum; of which 16 completed and returned a forum evaluation form. Based on the evaluation form results, the vast majority (94%) of respondents rated the forum as very good or good. Regarding what they found surprising, a number of respondents cited the number of child care operators with uncertain lease arrangements in New Westminster. Most respondents also felt that there was merit in exploring the applicability of the best practices and in holding an annual child care forum.

Child Care Focus Groups and Key Informant Interviews

Focus groups were held with individuals and groups which typically do not attend community events or complete questionnaire forms. These individuals and groups included lone parents, low-income families, recent immigrants and refugees. It also included parents of children that are currently on waitlists for a child care placement and parents of children with extra support needs. In many cases, the focus groups were conducted in locations where these individuals and groups regularly meet. Key informant interviews were conducted with child care operators, developers, employers and municipal representatives from other jurisdictions. The purpose of these interviews was to gain feedback on a particular need, policy or tool or to probe for more detail with regard to an item of interest.



9 Current Child Care Situation

Supply Considerations

In June 2008, the City of New Westminster had a total of 1,198 licensed child care spaces.

Table 2, below, shows the distribution of licensed child care spaces by type for each of the five sub-areas in New Westminster. A map of these sub-areas is included on the opposite page. Similar sub-areas are being used by the Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) as part of its Early Childhood Development Mapping Project for New Westminster. They are also being used by the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee and YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR). The differences between the various initiatives apply to the Downtown and Uptown sub-areas of New Westminster. HELP uses Royal Avenue as the border between these two sub-areas while CCRR uses Fourth Avenue. The ECD Committee combines these two sub-areas into one for the purposes of ECD hub development. For this report, Royal Avenue will act as the border, given that it aligns with Census track information and given that it is consistent with other City planning processes.

As table 2 reveals,

- The Uptown has the largest number of licensed child care spaces at 560, which represents 46.7% of the total number of spaces in New Westminster.
- The East and West Ends have the second and third largest shares of spaces, accounting for 20.8% and 19.4% respectively. Combined, they account for 40.2% of the total number of spaces in New Westminster.
- The Downtown and Queensborough have the smallest shares of spaces, accounting for 7.5% and 4.9% respectively. Combined, they account for only 12.4% of the spaces in New Westminster.

While it is useful to know how many spaces are located in the different sub-areas, the figures are more meaningful when considered with population information. If all categories of licensed child care, excluding preschool, are considered, New Westminster has 14.6 licensed child care spaces per 100 children aged 0 to 12.

Table #2: Number of Child Care Spaces by Type and by Sub-Area in New Westminster

Sub-Area	Family Child Care[1]	Group Daycare Centre (0-36 months)	Group Daycare Centre (30m-school entry)	Multi-Age Care	Preschool Care	Out-of-School Care	Total
Downtown	0	0	70	0	0	20	**90**
Uptown	76	53	120	8	50	253	**560**
East End	56	12	33	8	15	125	**249**
West End	56	12	45	0	40	80	**233**
Queensborough	14	0	25	0	20	0	**59**
Unlisted	7	0	0	0	0	0	**7**
Total	**209**	**77**	**293**	**16**	**125**	**478**	**1,198**

Table 3, below, provides a more detailed breakdown of group and out-of-school care spaces in each sub-area per 100 children in the relevant age groups.

The assumption is that the higher the child care space to population ratio, the better resourced the sub-area. In interpreting the data; however, three limitations should be noted:

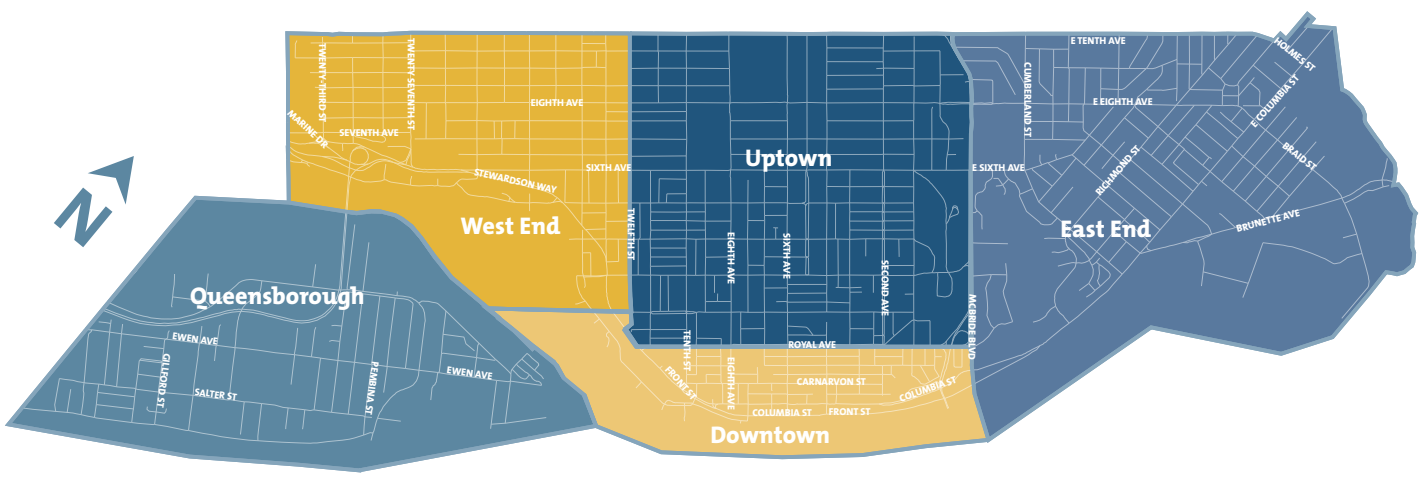
- that licensed and license-not-required family child care spaces are able to serve multiple age groups and are thus excluded from the calculations;
- that the statistics do not account for children receiving care in unregulated settings;
- that the statistics do not recognize the fact that, for various reasons (e.g., convenience to work, cost, quality of care, etc.), parents may choose to place their children in care outside their sub-area of residence.

While acknowledging these limitations, the data nonetheless suggest the following:

- The East and West Ends and Uptown sub-areas are the best resourced with each having a higher number of licensed group child care spaces than the average for New Westminster.
- The Downtown and Queensborough sub-areas are the least resourced with each having a far lower number of licensed group child care spaces than the average for New Westminster.

Table #3: Number of Licensed Group Child Care Spaces by Type and by Sub-Area per 100 Children

Sub-Area	Group Daycare (0-36 m)	Per 100 (under 3 years population)	Group Day care (30m-school entry)	Per 100 (3-5 years population)	Out-of-School Care (6-12 years)	Per 100 (6-12 years population)	Per 100 (0-12 years population)
Downtown	0	0.0	70	35.0	20	4.7	**9.9**
Uptown	53	7.3	120	17.5	253	17.2	**17.7**
East End	12	3.8	33	9.7	125	14.5	**15.4**
West End	12	6.0	45	21.4	80	13.7	**19.4**
Queensborough	0	0.0	25	9.6	0	0.0	**3.8**
Total	**77**	**4.4**	**268**	**15.8**	**478**	**12.3**	**14.6**



My son will be attending Grade 1 at Lord Tweedsmuir in September 2008. I called ten months ago for the after school care program. I am number 90 on the wait list. That blew me away.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

Demand Considerations

In order to understand demand for child care, it is important to examine characteristics of the local population and information on child care fees. Some key factors are as follows:

Population Growth and the Number of Children Aged 0 to 12 Years

Between 2001 and 2006, the City's population increased from 54,656 to 58,549 or by 7.1%. By 2021, it is anticipated that the City's population will be in the range of 65,860 to 81,660.[5]

In 2006, the number of children aged 0 to 12 years was 7,350. Of this number, 1,760 were aged 0 to 2 years, 1,695 were aged 3 to 5 years and 3,895 were aged 6 to 12 years, which combined represented 12.6% of the total population. In this same year, the Uptown had the higher and the Downtown the lowest number of children aged 0 to 12.

Unlike many other municipalities in Metro Vancouver which are experiencing declining student enrollment, School District #40 (New Westminster) has been the recipient of increasing enrollment over the past five years. In 2003/04, it had 6,240 school-age children and in 2007/08, it had 6,437 school-age children.

Given that the Downtown and Queensborough sub-areas are experiencing rapid residential development, with many buildings being occupied, under construction or planned, the above numbers likely do not reflect the current situation with regard to the number and percentage of children aged 0 to 12 years.

Participation in the Workforce

In 2006, there were 8,405 women (15+) in private households with children at home in New Westminster. Of this total, 6,175 or 73.5% were in the labour force. With regard to those women who had children at home and who were in the labour force, 1,420 or 23.0% had children under six years of age; 720 or 11.7% had children under and over six years of age; and 4,035 or 65.3% had children over six years of age. In 2006, the Uptown had the highest and the Downtown had the lowest number of women who had children at home and who were in the labour force. In fact, the Uptown had 38.0% of the total; followed by the East End, which had 21.5% of the total.

The higher the percentage of women with children at home in the workforce, the greater the demand for all types of child care. Based on the child care questionnaire for parents, a number of respondents commented that they had delayed returning to work after their maternity benefits had ended or had dropped out of the workforce due to the lack of available child care in New Westminster. In fact, 61% of respondents reported that the lack of suitable child care had limited their ability to work or to find work.

Cultural Diversity

New Westminster is experiencing increasing immigration, with the majority of recent immigrants arriving from Asia and South Asia and the majority of refugees from Africa. As such, the face of the city is changing, with more people reporting visible minority status and more people speaking a multitude of languages. In fact, about a third (31.7%) of the population were immigrants in 2006, with close to one quarter (23.1%) of immigrants having less than five years of Canadian residency. Regarding these immigrants, 46.8% spoke a language other than English at home in 2006, with the most commonly spoken languages being Chinese, Punjabi, Tagalog, Korean and Spanish.

Based on the focus groups held with women arriving from Africa and Latin America, the practice of handing a child over to a stranger to care for him or her is quite a foreign concept. Many also had a very limited understanding of

[5] Coriolis Consulting Ltd., "New Westminster Urban Development Forecast: 2003-2021," 2004.

I am no longer wait listing parents. The placement period has exceeded 18 months and I don't want to give them false hope. It is heart breaking to hear their stories and the situation speaks to the crisis in child care.

Child Care Operator Questionnaire Respondent, 2008

the licensed child care system, including how to access information, how to gain a placement and how seek a child care subsidy. As immigrant and refugee women become more familiar with the concept and system and as more of them participate in the workforce, the demand for child care will increase. This may place additional stresses on care providers, as they will be dealing with more children and parents whose first language is not English.

Family Composition

In 2006, 16.8% of family households in New Westminster were headed by lone parents. Of these families, 81.2% were headed by a female and 18.8% were headed by a male. Female lone parent families earned 43.1% and male lone parent families earned 72.8% of the median income earned by married-couple families. In 2006, the Uptown had the highest number and Queensborough had the lowest number of lone parent families. In fact, the Uptown had 39.7% of the total; followed by the Downtown, which had 21.1% of the total.

Lone parents are highly dependent on child care to participate in the workforce. Lone parents, especially female ones, are also the least able to pay for child care fees and are thus highly dependent on child care subsidies. For lone parents on income assistance, recent evidence suggests that the most effective way of enabling sustained employment is to improve access to affordable, high quality child care. Access to child care has also been shown to improve child outcomes and reduce social isolation.

Family Incomes

In 2006, there were 2,415 families with incomes under $30,000 in New Westminster, which represented 16.7% of all families. The Uptown had the highest number and the West End had the lowest number of low-income families. In fact, the Uptown had 50.5% of the total; followed by the Downtown, which had 20.5% of the total. As stated earlier, married-couple families had considerably higher incomes than for both male and female lone parent families.

Child care fees (see table 4) represent a significant monthly expense, especially when combined with the high housing costs in New Westminster. Based on the child care questionnaire for parents, the reported percentage of family income which was allotted to meeting child care related expenses averaged 16%. Additionally, 23% of respondents reported that they were in receipt of a child care subsidy, with 47% of them reporting that it is insufficient in making up the difference between their ability to pay and the cost of their current child care arrangements.

Table #4: Child Care Fees in New Westminster as of June 2008

Reporting Period	Under 1	Toddler (1–3 yrs)	Preschooler (30 mos–5 yrs)	Kindergarten	Grade 1 and up
Minimum Full-Time Cost Per Week	$138.00	$115.00	$92.00	$69.00	$46.00
Maximum Full-Time Cost Per Week	$218.50	$224.25	$178.25	$174.80	$103.50
Average Full-Time Cost Per Week	$171.48	$167.23	$140.71	$130.17	$70.71
Average Full-Time CostPer Month	$703.06	$685.64	$576.91	$533.70	$289.91
Median Full-Time Cost Per Month	$735.00	$720.00	$580.00	$565.00	$310.00

YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral

The fee information is reported on a weekly basis as some child care providers report fees on a daily basis and some on a monthly basis.

More detailed demographic and socio-economic information is provided in appendix #3.



Demand Indicators

Two key demand indicators are the number of requests for child care and the number of children on the wait list for a placement by type of care.

In 2007, YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) received 444 calls from parents asking for assistance in finding child care for 520 children. In 2006, CCRR received 199 calls from parents asking for assistance in finding child care for 250 children. As such, the number of requests for child care increased by 108% for the years in question.

Table 5 provides information on the number of child care requests by sub-area for New Westminster.[6] Between January 2006 and June 2008, CCRR received 722 child care requests.

Table #5: Child Care Requests by Sub-Area between January 2006 and June 2008

Sub-Area	Under 1	Toddler (1–3 yrs)	Preschooler (30 mos–5 yrs)	Kindergarten	Grade 1 and up
Downtown	14	62	42	24	142
Uptown	8	63	38	36	145
East End	7	44	26	23	100
West End	6	35	19	17	77
Queensborough	5	27	42	43	117
Multiple Neighbourhoods	9	41	38	53	141
Total	**49**	**272**	**205**	**196**	**722**

YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral

[6] Please note that the data reflect the sub-areas as reported by CCRR with the boundary between the Downtown and Uptown sub-areas being Fourth Avenue. As such, the data inflates the number of requests for the Downtown and deflates the number of requests for the Uptown.

Of those parents who requested a specific sub-area (74.4%), the requests were distributed between the five sub-areas, ranging from 13% to 25%. The Uptown, Downtown and Queensborough sub-areas received over 20% while the East and West End sub-areas received far less than this percentage.

With regard to wait list information, 91% of the 34 child care operator questionnaire respondents (who answered this question) reported that they maintained a wait list. Subsequently, a telephone survey of 11 child care operators who did not respond to the questionnaire was completed. Based on the two sets of data, just over 84% of the 45 questionnaire and telephone survey respondents maintained a wait list.

In reviewing the consolidated data, the longest waitlists in terms of numbers were for infant/toddler and out-of-school care. For these two care types, the numbers on the wait list for a particular program was often greater than the total number of spaces for that program and the wait time was often measured in years.

Based on the questionnaire and in discussions with telephone survey respondents, a number stated that wait list information is not a reliable indicator of demand for the following limiting factors:

- that some care types are not available in certain sub-areas of the City (e.g., infant/toddler care in the Downtown) and, as such, there will be no wait lists for these care types in that sub-area;
- that some child care operators do not maintain wait list information or do not record names after they have reached a certain threshold;
- that some parents may not request to be placed on a wait list given the number of names already on the list or the anticipated wait time for a placement to become available;
- that parents can place their children's names on multiple wait lists at one time.

For these reasons and others, wait list numbers have not been reported by type for the City and its five sub-areas.

Profiles

School District #40 (New Westminster) currently accommodates 220 out-of-school care spaces and 36 group child care spaces within its school facilities or grounds. The former are operated by the Westminster Children's After School Society and the later are operated by the Lower Mainland Purpose Society.

Statistics Canada (2003) reported that women with children under the age of three are participating in the labour force in ever-increasing numbers, rising from 28% in 1976 to 63% in 2003. The percentage of women with children between the ages of three and five years is even higher at 69%.[7] Additionally, Statistics Canada reported in The Daily on April 5, 2006, that 54% of children aged six months to five years were in some form of non-parental care in 2002/03. This is an increase of 12 percentage points since 1994/95.

New Westminster Secondary School, with a total student population of over 2,000 students, has 41 different home languages not including English. Following closely is Lord Kelvin Elementary School with 36 different home languages not including English. (School District #40, "Multicultural Needs Assessment, June 2006)

[7] Statistics Canada, "Women in Canada: Work Chapter Updates," 2003.

10 Issue Identification and Analysis

The following issue analysis is based on the results of the child care operator and parent questionnaires, the focus groups and the key informant interviews. Its purpose is to provide a summary of some of the major issues that are addressed by the recommended actions as contained in the Child Care Strategy. It should be emphasized that other issues and needs, many of a specific nature, have been identified and documented. These issues and needs also inform the development of the recommended actions. For complete consultation results, refer to the Companion Document.

Issue #1: Shortage of Child Care Spaces

There is a shortage of regulated (licensed and license-not-required) child care spaces in all sub-areas in New Westminster. With 91% of child care facilities operating at capacity and 84% reporting waitlists, it is difficult for parents to find a placement for their children. As a result, over 40% of children (in non-parental care arrangements) find themselves in unregulated settings in New Westminster, which may be placing these children at risk from a developmental, health and safety perspective.

The two types of licensed child care that are most in demand are infant/toddler (0 to 3 years) and out-of-school care (6 to 12 years), with child care operators reporting wait periods of a year or longer. Regarding the former, some parents are delaying returning to work or are moving to other municipalities where licensed child care spaces are more readily available, which has economic implications for New Westminster. Regarding the latter, the shortage of out-of-school care spaces is a contributing factor in the increasing incidence of latchkey kids.

The two sub-areas with the highest unmet demand for licensed child care are the Downtown and Queensborough. The contributing factors behind this unmet demand are the limited number of licensed child care spaces and the rapid residential development which is occurring in these two sub-areas. Currently, there are 90 licensed group child care spaces in the Downtown, 20 of which are located in a facility which requires major building upgrades, and 59 licensed family and group child care spaces in Queensborough[8], 45 of which are located in a facility which requires major building upgrades.[9]

Issue #2: Quality of Child Care Spaces

The lack of quality child care spaces is a major barrier to access. In fact, 17% of parent questionnaire respondents cited quality as one of the factors that limited their ability to find a placement for their children. While quality is a subjective term, a number of respondents cited the need for child care to be regulated; for staff to have a post-secondary education or training; for child care settings to be well designed and appropriately equipped; for smaller group sizes with high adult to child ratios; and for well-structured programs. Regarding the first two variables, 70% of respondents felt that regulated child care is very important to them and 64% of respondents felt that child care staff having an Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate is very important to them. Child care operator questionnaire respondents cited similar needs related to quality and referenced several others, including the need

[8] The Westminster Children's After School Care Society has applied to operate 20 out-of-school care spaces at Queen Elizabeth Elementary School in Queensborough. These spaces, if approved, will become operational in September 2008.

[9] This number includes 20 licensed preschool spaces. Preschools are part-time programs offering not more than four hours of care per day. Many studies do not include preschool spaces in their counts of licensed child care spaces as they do not provide full-time care for children with working parents.

Where do I start? Daycare spaces are non-existent and when you do find a space, you wonder about the quality. A church basement is not where I envisioned my child spending the better part of his day. We need two incomes to pay the mortgage, thus we don't have the option of one of us staying home. The hours are sometimes an issue, as I occasionally work overtime. On these days, my husband leaves early from his job in Richmond.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

for improved pay and benefits for staff (to reduce turn-over) and enhanced physical environments (i.e., adequately sized, located on one level, physically accessible, etc.).

Issue #3: Cost of Child Care

The cost of licensed child care is a major barrier to access. In fact, 15% of parent questionnaire respondents cited the cost of child care as one of the factors that limited their ability to find a placement for their children. As such, cost ranked third behind availability (30%) and quality (17%). With regard to the percentage of household income which is allocated to meeting child care related costs, the average among parent questionnaire respondents was 16%. This is quite a high percentage, especially when coupled with the percentage of household income which is allocated to meeting housing related costs in New Westminster.

With regard to the child care subsidy, which is a provincial financial benefit that assists low to moderate income families with their child care costs, 23% of parent questionnaire respondents reported that they were in receipt of this benefit. With regard to these recipients, 47% reported that the benefit is insufficient in making up the difference between their ability to pay and the cost of their current child care arrangements. As such, some parent questionnaire respondents reported that they had to use funds needed for clothing, food and shelter to make up the difference. Several parent questionnaire respondents also emphasized that the high cost of child care, especially for two or more children, was a factor in them not returning to work or exiting income assistance.

Issue #4: Lack of Flexible Child Care Arrangements

No regulated child care facilities offer non-traditional hours in New Westminster. For parents who work evenings, holidays, shifts or weekends, or who require drop-in, emergency or part-time care arrangements, there are few, if any, options. As evidence, a number of parent questionnaire respondents and focus group participants reported that they were using informal care arrangements (e.g., family and friends) to bridge times when licensed child care is unavailable. Some parents are also paying for full-time care when they require part-time care in order to secure a child care placement or are relying on babysitters or nannies as they provide greater flexibility.

The lack of flexible child care arrangements was frequently cited as a factor which limited a parent's ability to work, with a number of parent questionnaire respondents reporting that were unable to accept positions with



non-traditional hours or work overtime. In fact, 51% of parent questionnaire respondents reported that the lack of suitable child care limited their ability to work, with another 10% reporting that it limited their ability to find work.

Issue #5: Child Care Challenges for Children with Extra Support Needs

It is estimated that between 7.2% and 7.7% of children have a disability.[10] This range could be far higher, as many children go undiagnosed or display needs that do not fit within the criteria being probed. Additionally, current research shows that between 5% and 20% of children require some level of extra support to participate fully in community-based programs. In School District #40 (New Westminster), 470 students in Kindergarten through Grade 12 or about 6.4% of the student population in 2007/08 fell under the classification of special education. Based on these 470 students, 24.5% had a learning disability; 21.7% had intensive behaviour interventions or serious mental illness; 15.3% had moderate behaviour support or mental illness; 14.9% had physical disabilities or chronic health impairments; and 12.3% had autism spectrum disorder.

Parents of children with extra support needs typically encounter issues related to availability, cost and flexibility; however, they are often more difficult to overcome because they intersect with the overarching challenge of securing care arrangements that are suited to the specific needs of their children.

Parent questionnaire respondents, focus group participants and child care operator questionnaire respondents cited a number of issues that are specific to children with extra support needs in child care, including: building design limitations related to physical accessibility; highly structured programs and large group settings; inadequate transportation; lack of program options, including occasional child care, and long wait lists for those that are available; limited hours for support workers; and no flexible child care arrangements. It was also reported that some child care providers have limited knowledge and skills to support integration and inclusion.



Issue #6: Shortage of Experienced and Qualified Staff

Ninety percent of child care operator questionnaire respondents with staffing needs reported that they had found it very difficult or difficult to find suitable staff. Finding substitutes and finding staff that are willing to work non-traditional hours, part-time or split shifts is particularly difficult. Finding staff that are experienced or qualified in providing infant/toddler and school aged care or who are skilled in working with children requiring extra support is also particularly difficult. The inability to find suitable staff was cited as a major impediment to increasing the supply of licensed child care spaces in New Westminster.

Child care operator questionnaire respondents reported that people are hesitant to enter the child care field given low wages and limited or no benefits. They also reported that child care workers are reluctant to take further education or training to advance their careers as it does not significantly improve their wage rates upon completion. Retaining child care workers was also cited as a major challenge as many workers are moving into other types of work that pay better. As such, several respondents reported that they are paying higher wages and offering more benefits, which contributes to higher fees or reduced income, which jeopardizes their ongoing sustainability.

[10] Canadian Institute of Child Health, National Population Health Survey, 1996/97.

Both my children attend daycare far from home. This is not ideal, as the children they interact with on a daily basis will not be going to their kindergarten or elementary school. Most of the parents do not live in our neighbourhood, thus it is difficult to arrange informal care. Ideally, I would like for my two children to attend daycare and after school care at their local elementary school.

Child Care Questionnaire Parent Respondent, 2008

Issue #7: Large Numbers of Child Care Operators with Uncertain Tenure Arrangements

There are a large number of child care operator questionnaire respondents who reported that their current tenure arrangements are insecure or relatively insecure. In fact, 46% of respondents reported that their tenure arrangements are insecure or relatively insecure and 9% reported that they did not know the status of their tenure arrangements. More concerning was the fact that many of the operators that reported that their tenure arrangements are insecure or relatively insecure are group child care centres. These centres provided 348 child care spaces in June 2008.[11] Additionally, two group child care centres with 75 spaces are located in facilities which require major building upgrades.

The large number of operators with insecure tenure arrangements or requiring major building upgrades has implications with regard to strategy development. As originally envisioned, the strategy was to augment the existing supply of licensed child care spaces with new ones. Given the issues identified above, equal effort will have to be made to stabilize existing child care spaces while creating new ones if gains are to be made. As one child care operator stated: "Existing providers are struggling to remain operational. As such, we need to build a solid foundation if we are to have a stable and sustainable child care system in New Westminster."



Issue #8: Limited Opportunities to Expand Existing or Create New Child Care Operations

There are a number of barriers or challenges to expanding existing child care operations or establishing new ones in New Westminster. About 40% of child care operator questionnaire respondents reported that their current building or space does not meet their program's future needs. In many cases, respondents stated that the program had out-grown the space or that the program was competing for space with other users. Regarding the latter, this was cited with regard to programs located in Douglas College and elementary and middle schools. Other barriers or challenges include: difficulties in finding qualified staff; lack of financing; poor condition of the building which makes it difficult to expand due to the high costs of renovating; and restrictions on making physical improvements in a leased building or space.

Regarding establishing new child care operations, the major barrier or challenge is locating suitable space that is also affordable. Several respondents are currently exploring the possibility of relocating (due to the uncertainty related to their tenure arrangements). These respondents reported that there are few options available to them and that the ones that are available are prohibitively expensive. Other barriers or challenges include: finding suitable outdoor play space that meets licensing requirements; having

[11] This number includes the 220 out-of-school care spaces operated by the Westminster Children's After School Society. Currently, the Society is involved in lease negotiations with School District #40 (New Westminster).

to rezone, especially in residential areas, which often results in NIMBYism; meeting building code and zoning requirements, including off-street parking; and securing financing to cover costs related to building purchase, retrofitting, furnishing and equipment.

Issue #9: Limited Municipal Assistance and Support for Child Care

While child care operator questionnaire respondents were generally appreciative of the assistance received from City staff, with 60% rating it as very good or good, the vast majority felt that the City could be doing far more to support existing and to create new licensed child care spaces in New Westminster. Regarding City staff, cited concerns included high turnover and the lack of a social planner position in the past. As one child care operator stated: "We need to have a strong advocate, champion and facilitator for child care within City Hall."

Several respondents commented that child care did not appear to be a corporate priority. They also commented that the City's focus has been on development rather than social service issues such as child care. As evidence, one respondent cited the fact that the current child care strategy is over a decade old and that "the City, which was once considered a leader in the field, is now in a position of having to catch-up." Many respondents referenced policies and tools being applied in other municipalities such as child care grants, density bonusing, favourable lease arrangements, permissive zoning, reserve funds and step-by-step guides to establishing child care facilities. It was noted that these policies and tools should be examined with view to applying them in New Westminster.

Several respondents also emphasized the importance of child care from a municipal economic perspective. It was felt that the City's new economic development position needed to be proactive in this area and that the Livable City Strategy needed to reference child care as a priority amenity. As one child care operator stated: "If we are to attract more highly skilled workers to New Westminster, then we will have to address their child care needs."

Issue #10: No Formal Child Care Relationship between the City and the School District

There were a number of child care operator and parent questionnaire respondents who felt that the City and the School District could be doing more to accommodate licensed child care spaces. It was noted that the City and School District are major land owners and that they operate a large number of facilities, some of which may house underutilized spaces. Several child care operator questionnaire respondents referenced other municipalities (e.g., Burnaby and Vancouver) whereby the City and School District are working together to support existing and to create new child care spaces. For example, the City of Vancouver and the Park and School Boards adopted a Child Care Protocol in March 2004. This protocol commits the three civic partners to maintaining and expanding accessible, affordable and quality child care.

The City and School District, along with Fraser Health, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the United Way of the Lower Mainland, recently signed a "Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the Development of Four Early Childhood Development Hubs Serving Six Neighbourhoods in New Westminster." While this memorandum is quite specific, it could act as a framework or model for joint action on child care.

Profiles

70% of parent respondents reported that licensed (regulated) child care is very important to them, while 15% reported that it is somewhat important to them. Only 4% of parent respondents reported that it is unimportant or very unimportant.

70% of parent respondents reported that children being able to continue or stay within the same facility as they age is very important to them, while 22% reported that it is somewhat important to them. Only 2% of parent respondents reported that is unimportant or very unimportant.

64% of parent respondents reported that child care staff having an Early Childhood Education (ECE) certificate is very important to them, while 26% reported that it is somewhat important to them. Only 3% reported that it is unimportant or very unimportant.

Appendix 1 Group Sizes and Staff/Child Ratios

Care Program	Maximum Group Size	Children Per Group	Ratio of Employees to Children in Each Group
Group Child Care (Under 36 months)	12, with a separate area designated for each group	≤4	One infant and toddler educator
		5–8	One infant and toddler educator and one other educator
		9–12	One infant and toddler educator, one other educator and one assistant
Group Child Care (30 Months to School Age)	25, with not more than 2 children younger than 36 months old in a single person	≤8	One educator
		9–16	One educator and one assistant
		17–25	One educator and 2 assistants
Preschool (30 Months to School Age)	20	≤10	One Educator
		11–20	One educator and one assistant
Group Child Care (School Age), if any preschool child or child in grade 1 is present	20	≤10	One responsible adult
		11–20	2 responsible adults
Group Child Care (School Age), if no preschool child or child in grade 1 is present	25	≤15	One responsible adult
		16–25	2 responsible adults
Family Child Care, if any child younger than 12 months old is present	7. having no more than 3 children younger than 48 months old and, of those 3, no more than one child younger than 12 months old	≤7	The licensee
Family Child Care, if no child younger than 12 months old is present	7. having no more than 4 children younger than 48 months old and, of those 4, no more than 2 children younger than 24 months old	≤7	The licensee
Occasional Child Care, if any child present is younger than 36 months old	16	≤4	One responsible adult
		5–8	2 responsible adults
		9–12	3 responsible adults
		13–16	4 responsible adults
Occasional Child Care, if no child present is younger than 36 months old	20	≤8	One responsible adult
		9–16	2 responsible adults
		17–20	3 responsible adults
Multi-Age Child Care, if any child younger than 12 months old is present	8, having no more than 3 children younger than 36 months old and, of those 3, no more than one child younger than 12 months old	≤8	One educator
Multi-Age Child Care, if no child younger than 12 months old is present	8, having no more than 3 children younger than 36 months old	≤8	One educator
In-Home Multi-Age Child Care, if any child younger than 12 months old is present	8, having no more than 3 children under 36 months old and, of those 3, no more than one child younger than 12 months old	≤8	The licensee, who must be certified as an educator
In-Home Multi-Age Child Care, if no child younger than 12 months old is present	8, having no more than 3 children younger than 36 months old	≤8	The licensee, who must be certified as an educator

Child Care Licensing Regulation, February 8, 2008

Appendix 2 Child Care Operating Program Funding Rates

The Child Care Operating Funding Program is intended to assist eligible licensed group and family child care providers with the cost of providing care. Funding amounts are dependent on enrollment as follows:

Group Child Care Providers		
Rate Category	4 Hours or Less	More than Four Hours
0 to 35 months	$6.00	$12.00
3 years to Kindergarten	$2.74	$5.48
Grade 1 to 12 years	$1.40	$2.80
Preschool	$1.37	$1.37
Family Child Care Providers		
Rate Category	4 Hours or Less	More than Four Hours
0 to 35 months	$1.85	$3.70
3 years to Kindergarten	$1.41	$2.82
Grade 1 to 12 years	$0.73	$1.46

Ministry of Children and Family Development

Appendix 3 Number of Children 0 to 12 Years by Sub-Area

	Downtown	Uptown	East End	West End	Queensborough	Total
Total Population (All Ages)	11,125	24,405	11,390	6,140	5,500	58,560
share of total	19.0%	41.7%	19.5%	10.5%	9.4%	
Age 0 to 12 years	910	2,885	1,520	995	1,040	7,350
share of total	12.4%	39.3%	20.7%	13.5%	14.1%	
Age 0 to 2 years	280	725	315	200	240	1,760
share of total	15.9%	41.2%	17.9%	11.4%	13.6%	
Age 3 to 5 years	200	685	340	210	260	1,695
share of total	11.8%	40.4%	20.1%	12.4%	15.3%	
Age 6 to 12 years	430	1,475	865	585	540	3,895
share of total	11.0%	37.9%	22.2%	15.0%	13.9%	

Statistics Canada – 2006 Census

Number of Females (15+) in Private Households with Children at Home and in the Labour Force by Sub-Area

	Downtown	Uptown	East End	West End	Queensborough	Total
Females (15+) in private households with children at home and in the labour force	860	2,345	1,325	830	800	6,175
children under 6 only	175	600	310	130	195	1,420
share of total	20.3%	25.6%	23.4%	15.7%	24.4%	23.0%
children under and over 6	120	215	155	105	110	720
share of total	14.0%	9.2%	11.7%	12.7%	13.8%	11.7%
children over 6 only	565	1,510	865	590	495	4,035
share of total	65.7%	64.4%	65.3%	71.1%	61.9%	65.3%

Statistics Canada – 2006 Census

Number of Lone Parent Families by Sub-Area

	Downtown	Uptown	East End	West End	Queensborough	Total
Number of Census families in private households	3,025	6,100	3,110	1,765	1,575	15,585
Number of lone-parent families	550	1,035	465	300	245	2,605
share of total	18.2%	17.0%	15.0%	17.0%	15.6%	16.7%

Statistics Canada – 2006 Census

Number of Low-Income Families by Sub-Area

	Downtown	Uptown	East End	West End	Queensborough	Total
All economic families (2005)	3,065	6,085	3,070	1,660	1,400	15,290
Number with income under $30,000	465	1,220	325	165	175	2,415
share of total	16.2%	20.0%	10.6%	9.9%	12.5%	15.8%

Statistics Canada – 2006 Census



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