

## Children's Brief #1: Child Care (District of Saanich)

July 8, 2008

Dear Mayor and Council:

Please accept our congratulations on completing your new Official Community Plan.

As a brief introduction, we represent individuals, public and community organizations that serve young children and families.

As the new Saanich OCP identifies, provision of child care is an essential service to both families with children and to employers. Regrettably, there is not enough quality, affordable and accessible spaces to meet the current and future needs of families in the Capital Region, including Saanich. There are many reasons for this, and we seek to work with all levels of government to overcome barriers to the creation of quality, affordable and accessible care for all children, particularly young children.

PLAY (Partnership in Learning & Advocacy for Young Children) and the Regional Child Care Council of Greater Victoria are finalizing a comprehensive costing and implementation plan for the provision of quality, affordable and accessible care for children aged 0 to 12 in our region. This plan can help the municipality of Saanich, and the region, strengthen its own planning goals to creating compact and sustainable communities. **We want to work in partnership with Saanich to make this plan a reality for children and families.**

Quality, affordable and accessible child care promotes the goals of sustainability. Some examples include:

Economic: The provision of quality, affordable child care is an important factor in hiring and retaining employees, according to the BC Chamber of Commerce, and a survey of 150 of Canada's senior business leaders.<sup>1</sup> For every dollar invested in quality, universal child care, research shows a rate of return of at least 2 dollars can be expected. In Greater Victoria, a family with two children aged 7 and under, with two wage earners, can spend up to 19% of their income on child care costs alone.<sup>2</sup>

Social: Research documents that universal access to quality child care promotes children's health and holistic development.<sup>3</sup> It is also documented to result in less unemployment and dependence on social welfare, increased tax revenue, and reduced crime.<sup>4</sup> Children attending licensed child care centres in BC improves children's developmental outcomes and reduces their vulnerability.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Space Initiative. 2007. [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca). Role of Child Care in Enabling British Columbians to Reenter the Workforce. BC Chambers of Commerce. 2007. [www.bcchamber.org](http://www.bcchamber.org)

<sup>2</sup> Living Wage 2008. Community Council. [www.communitycouncil.ca](http://www.communitycouncil.ca)

<sup>3</sup> Early Years Study. McCain and Mustard. 1999. <http://wwwFOUNDERS.net/ey/home.nsf/home!openpage>

<sup>4</sup> Vulnerable Children. Douglas Willms, editor. 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Human Early Learning Partnership, University of British Columbia. Presentation by Paul Kershaw. June 2008.

## **Children's Brief #1: Child Care (District of Saanich)**

Environmental: Dropping off and picking up children has been found to increase round trip commute times by 21 minutes in Canada's largest urban centres.<sup>6</sup> Increasing opportunities for children to be cared for close to home or work can reduce the environmental impacts of daily commutes, as well as promote physical activity by creating increased opportunities for walking and biking. The health spin offs are equally important for children and society, as physical activity plays a role in a comprehensive prevention strategy to addressing increasing rates of child diabetes and obesity.<sup>7</sup>

### **A Request to work with us to Support Child Care**

We respectfully submit the following request for Council's consideration:

- i. Advocate to senior levels of government on behalf of our region for supports to child care, including endorsing the Greater Victoria Regional Child Care Costing and Implementation Plan. This action acknowledges that the province has overall responsibility for child care. Supportive provincial policy and adequate federal/provincial funding is essential to significantly advancing quality, universal child care services in Saanich.
- ii. That the District of Saanich, working in partnership with PLAY, and the Regional Child Care Council, allocate resources to develop a child care plan for Saanich. Working within the framework outlined in the Greater Victoria Regional Child Care Costing and Implementation Plan, details that could be addressed in your community plan might include:
  - Adding child care facilities and spaces to the density bonus policy
  - Creation of a fund that would support capital costs of creating spaces/centres
  - Strategies to accommodate licensed family and group centres, particularly in population dense areas
  - Child Care Design Guidelines
- iii. Consult with Child Care Resource and Referral, Regional Child Care Council and PLAY on planning and zoning issues related to child care and young children as they arise.

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<sup>6</sup> General Social Survey: Commuting Times. The Daily. 2005. [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

<sup>7</sup> A Strategy for Combating Childhood Obesity and Physical Inactivity in BC Report. Legislative Assembly of BC. 2006.

## Children’s Brief #1: Child Care (District of Saanich)

### Overview of Saanich’s Child Care Capacity

- There are approximately 5,545 young children living in Saanich (32% of the region’s children aged five and under).
- There were 1810 licensed/registered child care spaces in January 2008, representing 35% licensed spaces in the region.
- There are 124 licensed infant-toddler spaces for 2,695 children aged 2 and under.<sup>8</sup>
- Between March 2007 and January 2008, 2 new group centres for children 30 months to school age opened, 1 preschool opened, 9 family child care centres opened, and 7 family centres closed, resulting in a net gain of approximately 54 spaces.
- There is currently 1 space for every 2.4 children aged five and under. A regional goal is one space per every 1.4 children. (Regional ratio is now 1 space for 2.7 children). An estimated 1,600 additional spaces in Saanich are necessary to meet this ratio.
- According to 2006 census, 15% of family households in Saanich are lone parent (the regional and national averages are 15.9%).

Please refer to attached map that identifies where child care centres are located in proximity to community assets and where children aged five and under live.

Child Population 2005	
Age (years)	Number
Under 1	855
One	930
Two	910
Three	960
Four	905
Five	985
Total	5545

Child Care Centre Type	# of Licensed/ Registered Spaces (Jan 2008)	# of Licensed Centres (Jan 2008)
Group Care (36 months and under)	124	8
Group Care (30 months to school age)	521	18
Family	679	97
Preschool	464	25
License Not Required	22	
Total	1810	139

### A Parent’s Story from Saanich

“My son Alexander (14 months old) has been on waitlists for months, and we are planning ahead by seeking fulltime care for January 2008. The Camosun day care facility would be our first choice since I work at the college, but we are realizing that we will be lucky to get him in there before he is 3 yrs old. This seems to be a pattern, that care for under 3 year-

<sup>8</sup> There are 8 licensed, centre-based spaces for children under 3. However, families utilize both licensed and unlicensed services in family homes, and there is no estimate available for how many children aged 2 and under are in such care arrangements.

## Children’s Brief #1: Child Care (District of Saanich)

olds is in short supply. Alex is 75th on the waitlist for one center, which makes his 14th placing at Springridge Center look fantastic. It’s hard not to get panicked, and in our situation we are lucky that we have family members in positions to be able to offer child care (for example, my mother is going to be traveling from Vancouver once a week in the fall to look after Alex for one day a week). If we didn’t have family that could help we would be sunk. We need more spaces in the under 3 category in centers that make parents feel confident that their child is being well looked after and learning vital developmental lessons in a happy environment when parents can’t be around.”

### Definitions of Care Types/Programs according to the Community Care Licensing Regulation

Care Type/Program Name	Definition
Group Child Care (Under 36 Months)	A program that provides care to children who are younger than 36 months old
Group Child Care (30 Months to School Age)	A program that provides care to preschool age children
Preschool (30 Months to School Age)	A program that provides care to preschool children who are at least (i) 30 months old on entrance to the program, and 9ii) 36 months old by December 31 of the year of entrance.
Group Child Care (School Age)	A program that provides, before or after school hours during periods of school closure, care to children who attend school, including kindergarten children
Family Child Care	A program in which the licensee is a responsible adult, and personally provides care, within the licensee’s persona residence to no more than 7 children
Multi-Age Child Care	A program that provides, within each group, care to children of various ages
In-Home Multi-Age Child Care	A program in which the licensee personally provides care, within the licensee’s personal residence, to no more than 8 children of various ages.

### Map-Legend Definitions

**Multiple Type-** A centre that provides more than one type of care program at one location. For example, a centre may offer group child care for children under 36 months, group child care for children 30 months to school age, and a preschool program, or a combination of any two of the above. Family child care and In Home Multi-Age child care is not included in this definition.

**License Not Required-** There are many unlicensed centres that operate within municipalities, which means that they are not regulated or inspected. Child Care Resource and Referral programs work to identify and build relationships with unlicensed centres (LNRs). Some of these centres will then register with the Child Care Resource and Referral programs, and these are the unlicensed centres we have been able to calculate spaces for, and to map. LNR’s are permitted to care for no more than 2 children unrelated to the care provider.