

## Children's Brief #1: Child Care (City of Colwood)

July 8, 2008

Dear Mayor and Council:

Please accept our congratulations on the completion of your Official Community Plan.

As a brief introduction, we represent individuals, public and community organizations that serve young children and families. We have been delighted to review Colwood's updated OCP and to see the attention given to addressing the needs of families and children, particularly in regards to child care. Thank you. It offers much encouragement.

As the Colwood OCP clearly identifies, child care is an essential service to 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 Colwood. 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 Colwood, and the region, strengthen its own planning goals to creating compact and sustainable communities. **We want to work in partnership with Colwood 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://www.founders.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.

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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 Colwood.
- ii. That the City of Colwood, working in partnership with neighbouring jurisdictions, PLAY, and the Regional Child Care Council, allocate resources to develop a child care plan specifically for the Western Communities. 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:
  - 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.

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### Overview of Colwood's Child Care Capacity

- There are approximately 1,030 young children living in Colwood (6% of the region's children aged five and under).
- There were 411 licensed/registered child care spaces in January 2008.
- There are 24 licensed infant-toddler spaces for 490 children aged 2 and under.<sup>8</sup>
- Since March 2007, 2 new centres were created, resulting in a net gain of 15 spaces.
- There is currently 1 space for every 2 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). Approximately 220 additional spaces in Colwood are required to meet this ratio.
- According to 2006 census, 14% of family households in Colwood are lone parent (regional and national average is 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	160
One	165
Two	165
Three	180
Four	180
Five	180
Total	1030

Child Care Centre Type	# of Licensed/ Registered Spaces (Jan 2008)	# of Licensed Centres (Jan 2008)
Group Care (36 months and under)	24	2
Group Care (30 months to school age)	140	6
Family	141	20
Preschool	100	5
License Not Required	6	
Total	411	31

### A Parent's Story

"I am the mother of two children, ages 1 and 3 and just returned back to work at the beginning of July (2007). I started casually looking for daycare in January by going to places and checking them out seeing if they were ones to keep on my list or not. By March I was seriously looking and by June 15th I was still looking and returning back to work on July 1st. The stress levels in our house were extreme. You start to evaluate everything from

<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.

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should I open up my own daycare to maybe I should give up my professional career. I was able to find care for my 3 year old but finding spots for an infant was really really difficult. As the clock was ticking I finally found care for my 1 year old and so far we are really happy with the care that both of our children are getting. It is crazy though - both of the kids are at different spots and my 1 year old is in a non licensed loving home (never thought I would put my child in a non licensed daycare). A good friend and I split two days - she works half a day and then looks after my children and I work half a day and look after her children and the other two days my children are in care and thankfully, I have Fridays off. I am fortunate that I have a flexible work schedule and a very flexible boss. Even though my stress levels were extremely high I could not imagine other women looking for care who do not have the same flexibility.

### 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.