

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

July 3, 2008

Dear Mayor and Council:

As a brief introduction, we represent individuals, public and community organizations that serve young children and families. We have been delighted to see Council dedicate staff time to the Child-Friendly Community Policy for Victoria, and to see opportunities created for children to provide input in the Parks Master Plan process last year. We understand that an Implementation Strategy for the Child-Friendly Community Policy is currently being finalized and is planned to be presented by staff at next month's Council meeting. Thank you. It offers much encouragement.

As acknowledged by the City, 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 Victoria. 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 Victoria, and the region, strengthen its own planning goals to creating compact and sustainable communities. **We want to work in partnership with Victoria 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.¹ 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.²

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

¹ Report on the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the Government of Canada's Child Care Space Initiative. 2007. www.hrsdc.gc.ca. Role of Child Care in Enabling British Columbians to Reenter the Workforce. BC Chambers of Commerce. 2007. www.bcchamber.org

² Living Wage 2008. Community Council. www.communitycouncil.ca

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

⁴ Vulnerable Children. Douglas Willms, editor. 2002.

⁵ 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.⁶ 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.⁷

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 Victoria.
- ii. That the City of Victoria, working in partnership with PLAY, and the Regional Child Care Council, allocate resources to work on a child care strategy or plan for Victoria that supports and fits with the framework outlined in the Greater Victoria Regional Child Care Costing and Implementation Plan, details that could be addressed in your strategy might include:
 - Creation of a fund that would support capital costs of creating spaces/centres
 - Ways to encourage businesses to support on-site child care
 - Neighbourhood level planning for child care facilities
 - Adding child care facilities and spaces to the density bonus policy
 - 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.

⁶ General Social Survey: Commuting Times. The Daily. 2005. www.statcan.ca

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

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Overview of Victoria's Child Care Capacity

- There are approximately 3,245 young children living in Victoria (19% of the region's children aged five and under).
- There were 1070 licensed/registered child care spaces in January 2008.
- There are 116 licensed infant-toddler spaces for 1,790 children aged 2 and under.⁸
- Between March 2007 and January 2008, 2 infant/toddler group centres closed, 6 family child care centres opened, and 5 family centres closed, resulting in a net loss of approximately 24 spaces.
- There is currently 1 space for every 2.5 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 1,000 additional spaces in Victoria are required to meet this ratio.
- According to 2006 census, 21% of family households in Victoria are lone parent (the regional and national averages are 15.9%).
- The child poverty rate after taxes for the City of Victoria is 20.1% (the BC rate is 16.1% after tax measures)⁹.

Child Population 2005	
Age (years)	Number
Under 1	650
One	580
Two	560
Three	495
Four	470
Five	490
Total	3245

Child Care Centre Type	# of Licensed/ Registered Spaces (Jan 2008)	# of Licensed Centres (Jan 2008)
Group Care (36 months and under)	116	9
Group Care (30 months to school age)	508	19
Family	182	26
Preschool	252	12
License Not Required	12	
Total	1070	60

A Parent's Story from Victoria

"I am a 33 year old mother of a 23 month old boy. I recently moved to Victoria for a job opportunity. I was put in the position of: #1 finding daycare in a new city, #2 looking for a place to live, #3 starting a new job. The first 3 months my son had to remain in Vancouver with family members who all took their holidays in coordination while I looked for childcare in

⁸ 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.

⁹ BC's Child Poverty Rate. First Call. May 2008.

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Victoria. It was very emotional and stressful for the two of us - simply because it took too long to find adequate and quality care.

By the end of the first week of looking for care, my son was on over 45 waitlists and simply looking for childcare became my full time job while starting a full time job.

In the end I received no call backs from any waitlists (some of which I paid to be put on) and ended up having the grand option of touring only 2 facilities with the 'possibility' of an opening. 2 weeks ago I settled on a daycare that would cost me an hour in commuting time (time I'd rather have with my son) but was the 'best" of very limited options.”

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 was mapped as Multiple Type. 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.

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.