

TO: MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1992 August 05
FROM: ACTING DIRECTOR PLANNING & BUILDING Our File: 17.336
X. Ref: 17.811

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM CHAIRPERSON OF GVRD BOARD
OF DIRECTORS REGARDING FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S
ABANDONMENT OF NATIONAL CHILD CARE STRATEGY

PURPOSE: To recommend a Municipal response to the request from the Chairperson, GVRD Board of Directors to write to the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare regarding the abandonment of a national child care strategy.

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare to express the Municipality's serious concern over the Federal government's abandonment of plans to develop a national child care strategy.
2. THAT a copy of this report and the letter to be sent to the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare be forwarded to the Chairperson, GVRD Board of Directors.

R E P O R T

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Appearing on this agenda is a letter from the Chairperson, GVRD Board of Directors requesting that Council write to the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare expressing concern over the government's abandonment of plans to develop a national child care strategy. This report is intended to assist Council in dealing with that request.

2.0 PERTINENT BACKGROUND

2.1 Federal Child Care Strategy

The Federal government made a commitment to establish a national child care strategy in 1984. Child care advocates were optimistic that the strategy would articulate a strong Federal role in the area of child care and would include provisions for Federal funding and standards for child care services. After years of deliberation, plans for such a strategy were formally dropped in the February 1992 budget speech.

2.2 Provincial Child Care Initiatives

In 1991 January, the Province released the report of the Provincial Child Care Task Force, "Showing We Care: A Child Care Strategy for the 90's." The report reviewed child care needs in B.C. and concluded that these needs could only be addressed effectively through enactment of a comprehensive strategy. The report recommended that the Province take the lead role in the strategy, with the Federal and municipal governments, school boards, and other sectors also assuming necessary responsibilities.

In 1991 November, Council received a report from the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee which summarized the Task Force Report and discussed the Task Force recommendations concerning municipal and regional district involvement in child care.

The Province has been pursuing a number of child care initiatives as a follow up to the Task Force recommendations. These initiatives are summarized in the booklet, "Child Care: A Community Partnership," released by the Ministry of Women's Equality in 1992 March.

2.3 Burnaby Initiatives

Burnaby has taken several steps to facilitate the development of quality child care in the municipality, such as:

- Establishing the Child Care Resources Group to serve as an advisory body to the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee and Council on child care matters.
- Initiating development of a Municipal child care centre in the Edmonds area on lands donated to the Municipality by B.C. Hydro.
- Requesting developers to provide child care facilities in large scale developments through the rezoning process (i.e. Metrotown and Eaton Centres).
- Coordinating development of a proposed Municipal Child Care Policy and Implementation Plan, currently under review by the Community Issues & Social Planning Committee, staff, and other appropriate parties.

The review and refinement of the proposed Municipal Child Care Policy and Implementation Plan will be completed in the fall. When adopted by Council, the revised policy and implementation plan should assist the Municipality in addressing local child care needs in a more planned and coordinated manner.

3.0 PROPOSED RESPONSE TO GVRD REQUEST

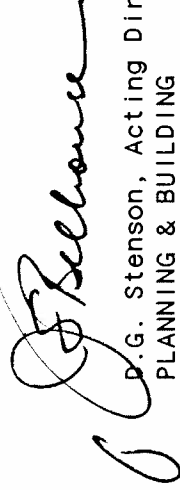
While the Province, Burnaby, and other municipalities have been pursuing various child care initiatives, it is clear that none of these bodies can effectively address child care needs on their own. Furthermore, a key assumption underlying the Provincial Task Force recommendations is that the Federal government would fulfill its commitment to enact a national child care act and strategy. The Federal government's abandonment of the proposed child care act and strategy is a major setback. The Federal decision will make the challenge facing the Province and municipalities in addressing child care needs all the more difficult.

Staff therefore recommend that Council respond favourably to the subject request from the Chairperson, GVRD Board of Directors. Specifically, we recommend that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Federal Minister of Health and Welfare to express the Municipality's serious concern over the decision to abandon development of a national child care act and strategy. We suggest that the letter highlight the commitment of Burnaby, other municipalities, and the Province to facilitating quality child care services. We further suggest that the letter indicate that such commitment is jeopardized by the abandonment of a national child care act and strategy. In closing the letter, we propose that the Federal Minister be asked to resurrect plans to develop an Act and strategy which includes provisions for funding (capital, operating, and developmental) and national standards for child care services.

It is further recommended that a copy of this report and the proposed letter to the Minister of Health and Welfare be sent to the Chairperson, GVRD Board of Directors.

4.0 CONCLUDING COMMENT

In these difficult economic times, it is understandable that the Federal government would be reluctant to commit the necessary funding to enact a national child care strategy. Nonetheless, staff believe that it would be prudent for the Federal government to reconsider its abandonment of the national strategy. A national strategy would help to improve the child care situation of Canadian families. It would also provide Provincial and municipal governments with necessary resources and support for their child care actions. Furthermore while the economic benefits are difficult to quantify, one can argue that money spent on enhancement of child care services for Canada's children is a sound investment in the country's future.



D.G. Stenson, Acting Director
PLANNING & BUILDING


JF/db

cc: Director Administrative & Community Services
Director Recreation & Cultural Services
Medical Health Officer

