



Meeting 2010 February 01

COUNCIL REPORT

**SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE**

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR  
AND COUNCILLORS*

**SUBJECT: CHILD CARE WORKER WAGES**

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. THAT the Mayor on behalf of Council, write to the Premier and the Provincial Minister of Children and Family Development urging them to develop a five year plan and funding strategy that moves child care from a user fee system to a universal, publicly funded system, and which supports an equitable entry wage for child care workers.
2. THAT the Mayor write to the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development urging them to implement a national child care strategy and work with the Provinces to establish a universal, publicly funded child care system.
3. THAT copies of this report be forwarded to Burnaby's Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament.

**REPORT**

The Social Issues Committee, at its 'Open' meeting held on 2010 January 21, received and adopted the *attached* report recommending that the City support the \$20/Hour Wage Strategy for Child Care Workers sponsored by the Early Childhood Educators of B.C.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. Calendino  
Chair

Councillor P. McDonell  
Vice Chair

Councillor A. Kang  
Member

Copied to: City Manager Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Director Planning and Building
--

**TO:** CHAIR AND MEMBERS  
SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE **DATE:** 2010 January 14

**FROM:** DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING **FILE:** 1750 20

**SUBJECT:** CHILD CARE WORKER WAGES

**PURPOSE:** To recommend that the City support the \$20/Hour Wage Strategy for Child Care Workers sponsored by the Early Childhood Educators of B.C.

---

**RECOMMENDATION:**

1. **THAT** the Social Issues Committee recommend to Council that:
  - a. the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Premier and the Provincial Minister of Children and Family Development urging them to develop a five year plan and funding strategy that moves child care from a user fee system to a universal, publicly funded system, and which supports an equitable entry wage for child care workers;
  - b. the Mayor write to the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development urging them to implement a national child care strategy and work with the Provinces to establish a universal, publicly funded child care system; and
  - c. copies of this report be forwarded to Burnaby's Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament.

**REPORT****1.0 BACKGROUND**

The Child Care Resources Group (CCRG) is a subcommittee of Burnaby's Social Issues Committee. Membership on the subcommittee includes representatives from Burnaby non-profit child care societies, the Burnaby School District, the Ministry of Children and Family Development, the YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral Program, and the City's Planning and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Departments. This report reflects the work of the CCRG.

As part of its approved Work Plan for 2009, the CCRG committed to making a presentation to the Social Issues Committee on the \$20/Hour Wage Strategy of the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. (ECEBC). The Strategy aims to raise awareness of the financial plight of child care workers, and advocates for a \$20/hour entry wage. This report provides information on the \$20/Hour Wage Strategy, and on what action would be needed at the Provincial level to make such a wage for child care workers a reality. The report has been prepared to complement the presentation by the CCRG at the Social Issues Committee Meeting on 2010 January 21.

## **2.0 THE \$20/HOUR WAGE STRATEGY**

According to the Early Childhood Educators of B.C. (ECEBC), the professional association of early childhood practitioners in B.C., one of the most difficult aspects of operating a child care centre today is the recruitment and retention of qualified child care workers. Research by the association indicates that workers are leaving the field, and new workers are not entering it, because of low wages, minimal benefits and other factors such as heavy workload, split shifts and lack of prestige associated with the work. This situation threatens the operational viability of some child care centres, and the current inventory of childcare spaces. In response, the ECEBC is calling for a \$20/hour entry level wage for child care workers. It believes that a \$20/hour entry wage articulates the value of the work provided by child care workers and that the Strategy itself will lead to a dialogue aimed at reforming the current fragmented child care system and its reliance on user fees to fund child care.

## **3.0 CURRENT CHILD CARE WORKER WAGES**

Based on information provided by four of Burnaby's largest non-profit providers of licensed group child care, permanent child care workers earn between \$13.38 and \$16.80 per hour which equates to \$24,384 to \$30,623 annually. Casual staff who are called in to cover vacation and sick time earn between twelve and twenty-five percent less. Although benefits vary depending on the child care society and whether staff are unionized, most child workers do not receive pension benefits.

The provision of child care services requires skills and training. To obtain a licence to practice as an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and to work with children ages 0 to 6, child care workers are required to complete one to two years of post secondary training. ECEs must renew their licenses every five years.

## **4.0 VALUING THE WORK OF CHILD CARE WORKERS**

Significant research has shown that the experiences of early childhood have a profound impact on the overall health and well-being of individuals through their life time. Studies have also documented that good quality child care programs have positive short-term and long-term effects on child development, school readiness and school success. It should be noted that ECEs who work with children ages 0 to 6 in child care settings are with a child for up to 35 percent of that child's early years. Good quality child care provides a stimulating, caring and safe environment during that time.

In addition to the positive impacts of quality childcare on children themselves, child care services enable parents to participate in the labour force and contribute to the economy. The value of child care - and other early childhood development programs - was recently recognized in a resolution developed by the Burnaby Board of Trade that was subsequently passed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. The resolution noted that “investing in a universal Early Childhood Development program is the most cost-effective strategy in the effort to improve the productivity of Canada’s current and future labour force”.

The positive effect of quality child care extends to families and employers as well. Studies have shown that working parents who know their children are in a safe and nurturing environment are more productive at work.

**5.0 IMPACT OF \$20/HOUR WAGE ON CURRENT CHILD CARE FEES**

Based on information provided by four of Burnaby’s largest non-profit group child care providers, child care fees can reach \$1,130 per month for infants and toddlers, \$760 per month for 3 to five year olds, and \$415 for school-aged children. The impact of a \$20/hour wage on child care fees is illustrated in the table below: fees would need to increase by 17 percent or more to support a \$20/hour wage for child care workers.

	<b>Current Monthly Fees</b>	<b>Monthly Fees Needed to Support \$20/hour</b>	<b>Increase</b>
Infant/ToddlerCare	\$1,025 - \$1,130	\$1,199 - \$1,468	17% to 30%
3 to 5 Year Old Care	\$700 - \$760	\$874 - \$927	22% to 25%
School Aged Care	\$322 - \$415	\$550 - \$575	33% to 79%

Based on their experience with parents, members of the CCRG believe that an increase in child care fees would cause hardship for many parents, particularly those with low income and those with more than one child in care. CCRG members note that many parents have already had to find alternative, informal arrangements because they are unable to afford current fees. While the Provincial government provides a subsidy for low-income parents, the maximum subsidies available cover only approximately 64 percent of infant/toddler fees, 75 percent of 3 to 5 year

old fees, and 54 per of current school aged fees. Clearly, it is not practical to expect that higher wages can be realized through increased child care fees.

## 6.0 NEEDED SENIOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Since 2007, child care advocates have called on the Federal and Provincial governments to develop a Child Care Action Plan to ensure that quality child care continues to be available, and to ensure that the financial compensation received by child care workers is consistent with and reflects the value of their work. As part of the Action Plan, child care advocates have called upon the Province to implement a five year funding strategy which would move child care from a user fee system to a publicly funded system. Such a strategy would include operating funding for child care, the expansion of the Child Care Subsidy Program, and capital funding – all of which would help to offset the higher child care worker wages which are required.

Unfortunately, funding for child care has moved in the opposite direction. In 2007, the Federal government terminated its Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Agreements with the provinces. Cancellation of the ELCC has resulted in a loss of \$455 million to B.C. for the operation of child care centres around B.C. between 2007 and 2010. In response to the cancellation of the ELCC Agreements, the B.C. Provincial government announced a \$150 million annual reduction in child care funding beginning in April 2007. Provincial government child care reductions have resulted in a 27% reduction in its child care operating funding program, a suspension of the major capital funding program and a 36% funding reduction to child care resource and referral programs. Provincial child care operating funds were used by child care operators to enhance the wages of child care workers. Since 2007, there have been minimal or no increases to child care worker wages.

## 7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

One of the critical challenges to operating a quality child care centre is the recruitment and retention of qualified child care workers. Child care workers are leaving the field, and new workers are not entering it, because of low wages, minimal benefits and other factors such as heavy workload, split shifts and lack of prestige associated with the work.

Based on a survey of select non-profit group child care providers in Burnaby, the highest wage paid to local child care workers is \$16.80 per hour, which equates to an annual salary of \$30,623. This situation mirrors that of child care workers in all of British Columbia, and is so unsustainable that the professional association of child care providers has launched a strategy to raise awareness of the financial plight of child care workers, and to advocate for a \$20/hour entry level wage.

With child care fees already consuming a second income in many families, it is not practical to expect that higher wages can be realized through increased child care fees. What is required, rather, is that the Province reverse the trend of recent years and infuse the child care system in British Columbia with adequate funding.

To: Social Issues Committee  
From: Director Planning and Building  
Re: CHILD CARE WORKER WAGES  
2010 January 14..... Page 5

Burnaby has a long history of supporting the development of a universal, publicly-funded child care system. In keeping with that tradition, and in light of current challenges in the system, it is proposed that the Social Issues Committee make the following recommendations to Council:

1. that the Mayor, on behalf of Council, write to the Premier and the Provincial Minister of Children and Family Development urging them to develop a five year plan and funding strategy that moves child care from a user fee system to a universal, publicly funded system, and which supports an equitable entry wage for child care workers;
2. that the Mayor write to the Prime Minister and the Federal Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development urging them implement a national child care strategy and work with the Provinces to establish a universal, publicly funded child care system; and
3. that copies of this report be forwarded to Burnaby's Members of the Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament.



B. Luksun, Director  
PLANNING AND BUILDING

MM:sa/tn

cc: City Manager  
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services

R:\Long Range Clerical\DOCS\Margie\Committee Reports\Child Care Worker Wages.doc