

SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

*HIS WORSHIP, THE MAYOR
AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: SURVEY OF BURNABY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council forward a copy of the report to the Burnaby School District, Fraser Health Licensing and the Burnaby-New Westminster YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral program for information.

REPORT

The Social Issues Committee, at its 'Open' meeting held on 2012 September 11, received and adopted the *attached* report providing the results of a survey of Burnaby child care providers regarding child care programs and the transition to full-day kindergarten in Burnaby elementary schools.

Respectfully submitted,

Councillor P. McDonell
Chair

Councillor P. Calendino
Vice Chair

Councillor N. Volkow
Member

Copied to:	City Manager Director Planning and Building Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
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TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS
SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

DATE: 2012 September 5

FROM: DIRECTOR PLANNING AND BUILDING

FILE: 13000 02

SUBJECT: SURVEY OF BURNABY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

PURPOSE: To provide the results of a survey of Burnaby child care providers regarding child care programs and the transition to full-day kindergarten in Burnaby elementary schools.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. **THAT** a copy of the report be sent to the Burnaby School District, Fraser Health Licensing and the Burnaby-New Westminister YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral program for information.

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

The Child Care Resources Group (CCRG) is a sub-committee of the Social Issues Committee. It is comprised of representatives from non-profit child care societies in Burnaby, as well as Fraser Health, 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 Building Department and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Department. Each year, the CCRG prepares a workplan for the approval of the Committee and Council.

On 2012 February 06, Council approved the 2012 workplan for the CCRG. One of the key activities of the workplan is to report on the results of a survey of Burnaby child care providers. One of the objectives of the survey, conducted in 2011 December and 2012 January, was to seek further understanding of the potential effect of full school day kindergarten on child care programs in Burnaby. The survey was also intended to be used to provide insights into the child care situation in Burnaby and assist the CCRG in its work plan objectives of monitoring the supply and demand for child care and advising on emerging child care needs and issues.

This report provides an overview of the survey results in relation to the work plan objectives of the CCRG.

2.0 CHILD CARE SURVEY

Licensed child care programs provide an important contribution to the social and economic development of the city. Quality child care supports parents and promotes early childhood development and later school success. Access to child care is also an important factor in the location decisions of families and businesses, and in recruiting and retaining parent employees.

In 2011 September, full school day kindergarten was implemented in all Burnaby elementary schools. According to the B.C. Ministry of Education, the decision to implement full school day kindergarten was based on a large body of research demonstrating the importance of children's early years as the foundation for lifelong learning and success in school and beyond.

There is general recognition that full school day kindergarten increases the universality of early care and learning for five year olds. At the same time, child care providers have expressed some concern regarding the potential effect that full school day kindergarten could have on their operations. To seek further understanding of potential concerns, the CCRG conducted a survey of Burnaby child care providers in 2011 December and 2012 January. The objectives of the survey were to determine:

- any effects experienced by child care providers as a result of full school day kindergarten;
- any changes child care providers have made to their programs, or are considering, as a result of full school day kindergarten (e.g., plans to expand) and any challenges they may face;
- any vacancies or shortages in available child care space; and
- any suggestions for ways the City and other community partners could assist child care programs.

The CCRG presented preliminary findings from survey to the Social Issues Committee in 2012 May. As detailed in its workplan, the CCRG also shared the findings with representatives of Fraser Health Licensing and the Burnaby School District.

3.0 SURVEY PROCESS

The CCRG's survey of Burnaby child care providers was initiated at the end of November 2011 once full school day kindergarten was underway in Burnaby elementary schools. Using the public list of child care centres in Burnaby compiled by Fraser Health, all licensed child care providers in Burnaby (223 in total) were mailed a postcard announcing the survey and requesting providers to go online on the City's web site to answer the survey. Operators were also given the option of phoning the City to request a paper version of the survey.

In addition to the postcard, the YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) emailed a notice of the survey to their membership. The email notice included a web link to the survey. By January 20, 2012, 104 providers had responded for a response rate of 47%. Good representation was received from child care providers across the city representing a cross section

of the various types of licensed child care (e.g., family and in-home multi-age child cares, group child care centres and preschools)¹.

4.0 FINDINGS

4.1 Effects

As expected, the survey results revealed that most respondents (65%) have experienced effects from the implementation of full school day kindergarten. Of the effects, the most common experienced by respondents were a reduction in revenue (38%) and vacant spaces in some programs (38%).

In explaining these effects, some group child care providers commented that they are providing fewer hours of care because five year olds have left their programs. This has resulted in reduced revenue and reduced hours of work and/or split shifts for some staff. Some home-based child care providers, who are limited to providing care for seven or eight children of mixed ages, commented that they have vacant spaces for children five years old and older.

In contrast, some preschool operators, whose programs may run for a maximum of four hours a day, commented that they have experienced an increase in demand for their programs as a result of full school day kindergarten. As explained by preschool operators, some parents are seeking a more structured program for their four years olds to prepare them for full school day kindergarten.

4.2 Program Changes, Plans and Challenges

Twenty percent of respondents indicated that they have altered their programs to respond to the changing environment in child care. Some group child care providers, particularly those providing before and after school care, have added, or are considering adding, preschool programs during the day when school aged children are not occupying the space. Some home-based child care providers indicated they would be changing their programs to provide more before and after school care for older children. Other home-based providers indicated that they want to care for more children under age four but are limited by the Provincial Child Care Regulation and, until recently, Burnaby Zoning Bylaw regulations, which restrict the number of children under four years old in home-based care. (Recent changes to the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw are discussed further in Sections 5.1 and 6.1 below.) Lastly, some preschool providers indicated

¹Child care centres are licensed under the Community Care and Facilities Act. There are a number of licensing categories based on the type of centre and number and age of children under care. Home-based child care centres (e.g., family and in-home multi-age care) may have up to 7 or 8 children in them, depending on the qualifications of the operator and other regulations. Group child care centres refer to centres that provide care to children of the same age group, e.g., infants/toddlers, children 30 months to school age, and school age children. Group centres are restricted by maximum group size, space requirements, staff qualifications and other regulations. Preschools provide an instructional program for children 30 months to school age. Preschool programs may run for a maximum of 4 hours per day.

they have expanded their programs, or are intending to expand them, by either lengthening their daily programs or offering preschool five days a week, up from two or three days previously.

Twenty-eight percent of respondents expressed concerns about the future of their programs. Their concerns related to high mortgage, rental or leasing costs and security of tenure concerns (e.g., other demands for their space, uncertainty about whether the lease would be renewed, sometimes in relation to school sites). Of those who indicated that they may need to find another space, or would like to expand their program, many mentioned the challenges in finding appropriate space for child care.

4.3 Vacancies and Shortages

Fifty-six percent of respondents reported vacancies in some programs. Of the different age groups, the highest number of vacant spaces were for school aged children (207 spaces), followed by children aged 30 months to school age (144 spaces) and infants/toddlers (31 spaces). Respondents explained that in group child care centres, vacancies are often a result of a lag time in filling spaces. A space may become available but the family next in line may not be ready to accept the space. In other cases, a group centre may keep spaces vacant until it has enough children of the same age group to support hiring another staff person.

Despite vacancies in some programs, fifty-five percent of respondents reported that they have waitlists to access their programs. Of the different age groups, there were 1,327 children aged 30 months to school age, 1,323 infants/toddlers, and 805 school aged children on waitlists maintained by survey respondents. While some providers have had to adjust, or intend to adjust their programs to manage vacancies, the number of children on waitlists would indicate continued demand for licensed child care in general.

4.4 Suggestions for Assistance

Respondents provided suggestions on ways that assistance could be provided to support their programs. Many suggested that greater assistance in finding suitable sites for child care was needed. Others suggested a greater role was needed in providing information about child care in the community (e.g., how to open a child care centre and information on the need for child care in different parts of the city).

5.0 INFORMATION SHARING

Survey respondents were informed that the results of the survey would be shared with Fraser Health and the Burnaby School District. Representatives of these two agencies provided comments, as detailed below.

5.1 Fraser Health Licensing

Fraser Health is responsible for implementing the Provincial Child Care Licensing Regulation in Burnaby. Staff from Fraser Health Licensing commented on the concern raised by home-based

child care providers regarding the number of children under four years old permitted in their centres, mentioned in Section 4.2 above. Fraser Health staff explained that the Child Care Licensing Regulation is designed to provide minimum standards for health and safety for children. The regulation takes into account that many home-based child care providers work alone. The regulation provides minimum standards related to emergency evacuation, children’s developmental needs, and the ability of children of different ages to interact.

In relation to this concern, an amendment to the Burnaby Zoning Bylaw, approved in 2012 April, now provides the option for one non-resident staff person to work in home-based child care centres. Previously, the home occupation provisions of the Zoning Bylaw did not accommodate the employment of a non-resident staff person in home-based child care centres. The bylaw amendment now provides the opportunity for some home-based providers to change their licensing category to care for more children under age four, provided they can meet staff qualification, staff to child ratios, and space requirements of Provincial Child Care Regulation. This previously approved bylaw amendment is discussed in further detail in Section 6.1 below.

5.2 Burnaby School District

School District staff commented on the concern raised by some providers regarding security of tenure, noted in Section 4.2 above. School District staff recognize the important role the School District plays in providing space for non-profit child care centres in schools and on school grounds. Staff also acknowledge that the implementation of full school day kindergarten has added to pressures for limited space in schools to support child care programs. That said, the School District is working to ensure that existing child care programs on school property continue to operate. Any additional requests from non-profit child care providers for school space will continue to be considered with relation to the current and projected instructional needs of individual schools.

6.0 RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

6.1 CCRG Response

The survey results provide insights into child care programs in Burnaby that will assist in the implementation of the CCRG’s 2012 workplan. In accordance with its current workplan, the CCRG will:

- 1) assist in examining the Zoning Bylaw for opportunities to facilitate the development of child care facilities; and
- 2) assist staff in the preparation of a step-by-step guide on the approval process for opening a child care centre.

As noted above, a number of respondents expressed concern over their security of tenure and the challenge of finding suitable sites for child care. The CCRG will also seek to further address this concern through its review of potential opportunities within the Zoning Bylaw to facilitate the development of child care facilities. For example, the review will examine the potential and

implications of including child care as an outright permitted use in commercial and other zoning districts. The CCRG assisted in a similar review of the Zoning Bylaw in 2011 that resulted in the above-noted bylaw amendment concerning home-based child care. The bylaw amendment provides for the option of having one non-resident employee in home-based child care, as noted above, and simplifies the approval process for home-based child care with up to 10 children in single family residential districts. With the bylaw amendment, new proposals for home-base child care in these zoning districts are now reviewed through the Preliminary Plan Approval process rather than under the more involved rezoning process.

The recent bylaw amendment also responds to home-based child care providers who wish to provide care to more children under four years old. With the amendment, home-based child care providers in single family neighbourhoods now have the option of changing their licensing category to group child care for eight to ten children of the same age group (e.g. infants/toddlers or 30 months to school age), provided they meet the staff qualification, staff to child ratios, and space requirements of the Provincial Community Care Licensing Regulation.

The second action in the current CCRG workplan will address the suggestion by survey respondents regarding the need for more information on the child care approval process. The CCRG will assist staff in preparing a step-by-step guide to the approval process. The guide will highlight the changes to the City approval process resulting from the recent bylaw amendment. The CCRG will also assist in promoting the new guide to existing and potential new child care providers in Burnaby.

6.2 Other Responses

The CCRG further notes that the survey findings confirm the important role it and community partners play in monitoring the supply and demand for child care and identifying emerging child care needs and issues. In particular, the CCRG will continue to work with its community partners in raising awareness of the importance of quality child care to support working families and to promote healthy child development. The CCRG will continue its efforts to publicize information on child care needs in the community (e.g., through an updated version of its Child Care Planning Resource Package) and promote awareness of existing community resources for child care providers and parents (e.g. services provided by the YMCA Child Care Resource and Referral program).

7.0 CONCLUSION

A key activity of the CCRG's 2012 workplan is to report on the results of a survey of Burnaby child care providers regarding their programs and the transition to full school day kindergarten in Burnaby elementary schools. The survey, conducted in 2011 December and 2012 January, revealed that most respondents had experienced effects from the implementation of full school day kindergarten. The most common effects were vacancies in some programs and a reduction in revenue. Despite the vacancies, most respondents maintain considerable waitlists for their programs. In response to the changing child care environment, many respondents have altered their programs while others, notably home-based providers, mentioned that they wish to care for

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From: Director Planning and Building
Re: Survey of Burnaby Child Care Providers
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more children under age four but are limited by licensing regulation. Of the respondents who indicated they may need to find another space for their program, a number mentioned the challenge of finding appropriate space for child care. Other respondents identified a need for more information about child care in the community.

The CCRG's current workplan responds to concerns raised by survey respondents. As detailed in Section 6.0 above, the CCRG will assist staff in examining the Zoning Bylaw for opportunities to facilitate the development of child care centres. It will also assist staff in preparing a step-by-step guide to the approval process for child care. The guide will also highlight changes resulting from a recently approved Zoning Bylaw amendment that simplifies the approval process for home-based child care and provides the potential for home-based providers in single family residential districts to change their licensing category to care for more children under age four.

As part of its workplan, the CCRG will continue to monitor the supply and demand for child care. Along with its community partners, it will raise awareness of the importance of quality child care to support working families and promote healthy child development. The CCRG will continue its efforts to publicize information on child care needs in the community and promote awareness of existing community resources for child care providers and parents.

It is recommended that a copy of this report be sent to the Burnaby School District, Fraser Health Licensing and the Burnaby-New Westminister Child Care Resource and Referral program for information.


L. Pelletier, Director
PLANNING AND BUILDING

MM/sla

cc: City Manager
Director Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services