

**From:** "Johnston, Sadhu" <Sadhu.Johnston@vancouver.ca>

**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"

**CC:** "City Manager's Correspondence Group - DL"  
"Singh, Sandra" <Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca>

**Date:** 5/29/2020 12:02:06 PM

**Subject:** Memo: Early Learning and Childcare Month Council Briefing: Questions and Clarifications

**Attachments:** ACCS - GM - Memo (Mayor & Council) Early Learning and Childcare Month Council Briefing Questions and Clarifications (2020-05-29).pdf

Dear Mayor and Council,

Attached is a memo from the General Manager of Arts, Culture, and Community Services, Sandra Singh regarding Early Learning and Childcare Month Council Briefing: Questions and Clarifications. Highlights include:

- Response to questions posed by Council during the Social Policy and Projects Early Learning and Childcare Month Staff/Council Briefing on May 11, 2020;
- An outline of some of the strategic considerations regarding work on a childcare strategy;  
Information on next steps concerning current and upcoming work on childcare;
- Additional information on a City childcare facility currently in development.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to email Sandra Singh at [Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:Sandra.Singh@vancouver.ca).

Best,  
Sadhu

Sadhu Aufochs Johnston | City Manager  
Office of the City Manager | City of Vancouver  
604.873.7627 | [sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca](mailto:sadhu.johnston@vancouver.ca)

Pronouns: he, him, his



*The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh peoples.*

---

## MEMORANDUM

May 29, 2020

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Sadhu Johnston, City Manager  
Paul Mochrie, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Lynda Graves, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Rena Kendall-Craden, Communications Director  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk  
Neil Monckton, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Alvin Singh, Communications Director, Mayor's Office  
Anita Zaenker, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Mary Clare Zak, Managing Director, Social Policy & Projects  
Mark Pickersgill, Senior Planner, Social Policy & Projects

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Early Learning and Childcare Month Council Briefing: Questions and Clarifications

---

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this memo is to:

- Respond to questions posed by Council during the Social Policy and Projects Early Learning and Childcare Month Staff/Council Briefing on May 11, 2020;
- Outline some of the strategic considerations regarding work on a childcare strategy ;
- Provide information on next steps concerning current and upcoming work on childcare; and
- Provide additional information on a City childcare facility currently in development.

### BACKGROUND

On May 11, 2020 Social Policy and Projects provided a briefing to Mayor and Council in celebration of Early Learning and Childcare Month. This briefing provided an update on the child care work plan and COVID-19 on themes of response, recovery and resilience:

- Phase 1: Response - Temporary Emergency Childcare for Essential Workers
- Phase 2: Recovery - Support Initial Restart and Reopening of Childcare Sector
- Phase 3: Resilience - Long-term Planning for Recovery and Resilience

During the briefing, questions emerged relating to the following:

- Childcare spaces funded through Community Amenity Contributions (CACs)

- The City of Vancouver’s Childcare Design Guidelines and outdoor program space requirements
- Childcare demand calculations
- Incentivizing childcare
- Centralized waitlist

## DISCUSSION

### **Q: How many City-facilitated childcares are funded through cash contributions vs. in-kind contributions?**

Approximately 38% of the childcare spaces delivered or committed by the City in the last 10 years are a result of in-kind CACs.

Over the past decade, 636 childcare spaces were delivered or committed as in-kind CACs. During the same time period, approximately 1,031 childcare spaces were delivered or committed as a result of cash CACs and DCLs. The majority of the childcare spaces include projects in new and seismic-replacement schools, and on City-owned sites such as the Gastown Parkades (Attachment A provides recent photos of the parkades child cares which are now under construction and expect to be ready to open in the Fall, 2020).

### **Q: What is the rationale for the City having greater outdoor program space requirements than the Provincial licensing requirements? Is the City considering amendments to the Childcare Design Guidelines?**

#### Background

The City of Vancouver’s Childcare Design Guidelines reflect an extensive body of national and international research on childcare design and child development. The Guidelines focus on:

- Appropriate siting and location considerations for childcare centres;
- Design considerations for operational efficiency;
- Design considerations for child safety; and
- Opportunities to improve long-term outcomes for children.

While BC Provincial regulations provide for minimum health and safety of children attending licensed childcare facilities, the City’s guidelines consider healthy child development outcomes including: physical, mental, social, and cognitive.

Research demonstrates that sufficient outdoor space allows for more humane environments for children, with children demonstrating less aggressive behaviours when adequate space is available (Brussoni et al., 2017). Access to quality childcare environments has also been shown to help equalize outcomes between disadvantaged children and their peers. The difference in outdoor space requirements between the Provincial licensing requirements and the City of Vancouver’s Childcare Design Guidelines are as follows:

- Province: 6 m<sup>2</sup> per child
- CoV: 14 m<sup>2</sup> per child

Active play is a requirement for licensed childcare facilities. To maintain a Provincial childcare license, childcare facilities must be able to provide each child with multiple daily active play opportunities – for children 2-5 years, a minimum of 180 minutes per day throughout the day is required. Adhering to the Childcare Design Guidelines helps to enable operators to provide indoor and outdoor active play with minimal barriers.

In addition, the City's outdoor space requirements allow for a greater range of large-muscle movements (e.g. running, jumping, biking), which has been proven to be essential in preventing chronic health problems such as obesity and diabetes, and in promoting cognitive, social, and emotional brain development. Ample space for children to learn and play is especially critical in high-density urban areas like Vancouver, where an increasing number of children are growing up in smaller housing units without access to open space, especially open outdoor space, at home.

### Approach

While the City's Childcare Design Guidelines are applied to all new group childcare facilities in Vancouver, considerable flexibility is exercised in the application of the Childcare Design Guidelines for childcares proposed in retrofit projects. In such retrofit projects, City staff from various departments consider the indoor and outdoor constraints of the existing building and site, and staff work closely with the applicant to help ensure that the childcare can meet the intent of the Childcare Design Guidelines.

Some examples of flexibility and innovation in how the Childcare Design Guidelines are applied include:

- Creative design solutions that allow the space to successfully meet performance objectives, even where a site has inadequate outdoor space to meet the Childcare Design Guidelines space requirements.
- An appropriate reduction in outdoor space requirements when park space nearby is easily and safely accessible, and has capacity to accommodate daily use.
- Up to two childcare programs of the same licensing type can be permitted to rotate the use of one outdoor play space, provided other performance objectives can be met.

In City-facilitated projects, staff continue to look for new opportunities to make efficient use of space for childcare facilities, including:

- **Shared outdoor play space:** In recent years, Council has directed City childcare facilities located on or adjacent to Park lands to enable outdoor childcare program space to be available for public use outside of childcare hours (e.g. West Fraserlands Childcare and Oakridge Transit Centre Childcare).
- **Shared multipurpose space:** Childcare projects co-located in community service hubs are designed to allow multiservice operators to use childcare outdoor program places as part of more diverse programming outside of childcare hours. Staff continue to plan for childcares as part of community service hubs, while exploring ways to facilitate the use of these multipurpose spaces to maximize their capacity to provide community services.

Staff are not considering revisions to the Childcare Design Guidelines. Staff are confident that enough flexibility and discretion exist in the current application of the Childcare Design

Guidelines to provide a balance between the urgent need for space creation with positive health outcomes for children.

### **Q: How does the City calculate licensed childcare space need and shortfall?**

The City uses a Childcare Calculator model that was developed in 2010 to enable estimates of existing and projected childcare needs.

- **Childcare Supply:** Vancouver Coastal Health Licensing and the Westcoast Child Care Resource and Referral Unit provide up-to-date data on licensed childcare spaces in Vancouver, which reflects Vancouver's childcare provision capacity.
- **Childcare Demand:** Census data is used to determine child population and labour force participation of parents. Additional assumptions are applied to account for different childcare usage rates by children of different ages. These assumptions provide a more conservative estimate of childcare demand, recognizing that not every child's family requires, or will request access to, a licensed childcare space.
- **Shortfall/Needs:** The difference between estimated childcare demand, and actual supply of childcare spaces.

In addition to these estimates, staff apply priority considerations at the neighbourhood and site levels when planning for childcares to account for differences in childcare demand due to demographics, child vulnerability, accessibility of sites (e.g. along transit corridors), and opportunities for development.

### **Q: How can the City incentivize childcare development?**

Identifying new tools and incentives for the creation of childcare is a key part of ongoing childcare planning and policy work. This work depends on successful ongoing collaboration between the childcare planning team in ACCS, and its colleagues in PDS, REFM and Finance. An opportunity also exists to further some of the partnerships the City has with senior levels of government, as well as the non-profit childcare operators that the City works with. Some of the intended collaborative work will include:

- **Review of Development Tools:** Working closely with PDS, staff seek to identify what tools might be leveraged to help incentivize or compel the creation of new childcare spaces in development. Considerations include:
  - Floor Space Ratio (FSR) exemptions;
  - Potential childcare related requirement for Sustainable Large Sites;
  - Creation of district schedules to facilitate childcare development;
  - Review of Density Bonus Zoning to facilitate childcare development; and
  - Tools to include childcare in non-market housing projects as a standard model of development.
- **Workplace / Workforce Childcare Policies:** Vancouver's childcare planning has been conducted with the understanding that parents seek out childcare close to home and/or work. As new opportunities for office/commercial projects continue to arise, and childcare demand increases, staff have been exploring the use of new and existing tools

to incentivize or compel employer-supported childcare delivery as part of new development, including:

- Use of commercial linkage fees towards employment-based childcare;
  - Consideration of different ownership models for childcare amenities; and
  - Identifying models in which employers may voluntarily secure access to childcare spaces (onsite or offsite) for employees
  - Explore feasibility of supporting childcare to serve non-standard employment hours
- **Continued Advocacy and Expanded Partnerships:** Considering the City's MOU funding partnership with the Province, the staff would like to continue to work with senior levels of government to explore deeper partnerships that could help to further support for capital, operating, and administrative functions. Staff will also continue to work with its non-profit childcare partners to build and strengthen the local sector's overall capacity and resiliency.

### **Q: Has the City looked into a centralized waitlist system for childcare?**

A centralized waitlist system for childcare is a long-standing goal. While opportunities (particularly for more centralized communication and data access) have been sought, the financial, logistical, and equity challenges of developing and effectively administering such a system have proven to be a challenge. One of the perpetual challenges of implementing a centralized waitlist system in Vancouver is that such a system must address equity across a patchwork of providers and systems that is currently inequitable.

Childcare planning staff are aware of work completed by a cohort through CityStudio ("The Coop: A platform that optimizes the way parents explore, compare, and arrange care for their children"), however childcare planning staff was not connected to this work. Staff will reach out to the appropriate CityStudio representatives and will report back to Council once a thorough review can be done. Staff is also exploring centralized waitlist systems currently employed across other jurisdictions (i.e. Toronto). Similar conversations are also taking place with the Ministry of Child and Family Development (MCFD) as to how the Province could potentially help support a waitlist system.

## **STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Childcare Strategy**

In recent years, the shifting landscape for childcare has led to an evolving relationship with the Province, including a major funding partnership and the creation of new capital targets for childcare in Vancouver. A Council-supported priority for many years, childcare has now been officially acknowledged as an essential service in the midst of COVID-19. With these changes comes a renewed need to update the City's Childcare Strategy and directions for moving childcare forward. ACCS staff have initiated scoping of a Childcare Strategy Update, which will review the City's roles and strategies in childcare to date, identify how best to position the City in childcare development moving forward, and articulate strategic directions and a policy framework for the City.

The Childcare Strategy is intended to be underway now, in order to inform and be informed by the development of concurrent City plans and policies, including Vancouver Plan, the Equity Framework and other COVID-19 recovery efforts.

A number of “action while planning” items will also need to be advanced in the short-term, ahead of the completion of an updated Childcare Strategy.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

In the coming months, childcare planning staff at the City will:

- Respond to and aid in immediate recovery efforts within the childcare sector;
- Continue to conduct regular work on regulation and review of rezoning and development applications;
- Expand the childcare toolbox through policy development, implementation strategies, and identification of tools to incentivize and compel the creation of childcare spaces; and

Ensure collaboration across service groups and departments, as a crucial component to the success of the childcare program, both in terms of short-term and pilot projects, and well as to ensure broad, long-term alignment with City policy in general.

#### **FINAL REMARKS**

If there are any questions or Councillors need additional information, please feel free to contact Sandra Singh, General Manager at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca)



Sandra Singh, General Manager  
Arts, Culture, and Community Services

tel: 604.871.6858

[sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca)

#### **Attachment(s)**

1. Attachment A – Gastown Parkades Progress

## ATTACHMENT A: PROGRESS REPORT - CHILDCARE AT GASTOWN PARKADES



**Addresses:** 150 Water St.      Water View YMCA Child Care  
151 Cordova St.      Portside YMCA Child Care

**Childcare Spaces:** 74 total

- serving ages 0-3 (24 spaces) and ages 3-5 (50 spaces), in two 37-space centres

**Expected Opening:** December 2020

### **Unique Site:**

- Two similar 37-space centres will be located on adjacent rooftops of the City-owned Water Street and Cordova Street Parkades, connected by a pedestrian bridge, and sharing support functions (e.g. parking, recycling)
- This creative approach leverages underutilized City assets (rooftop parking areas) to help meet childcare need in Downtown Eastside and Downtown. These are key underserved areas where available sites for childcare are most limited and land costs are high.

**Funding:** \$17.3 M total project cost

- Funding sources include Downtown cash CACs and senior governments
- This project is more costly than similar childcare projects on other sites, due to
  - site and structural parameters that limited the size of each centre
  - a very constrained downtown site with almost no crane space and difficult access and parking for trades and workers, and
  - typical costs and risks associated with work in existing buildings.

### **Sustainability:**

- Vancouver's first Passive House childcare centres will have solar panels on the roof.
- Designed to achieve LEED Gold and Passive House Standard certifications

### **Proposed Operating Model**

- Operated by the YMCA of Greater Vancouver, these facilities are anticipated to serve the families of downtown office workers, Downtown Eastside residents, and general public living and working in Vancouver. Dedicated operational supports could be sought to support targeted inclusion of families with low income.