

Making Strides

Vancouver's Childcare Strategy



Appendix A

Policy Framework with Early Actions



Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Land Acknowledgement | 1 |
| Introduction: Towards the Future of Childcare in Vancouver | 2 |
| Making Strides towards a Good Start for All | 2 |
| Looking Ahead to the Future of Childcare | 10 |
| What We Heard | 12 |
| Introducing the Childcare Strategy Policy Framework | 14 |
| Direction 1: Plan for Expanded Childcare in Complete Neighbourhoods | 17 |
| Direction 1 Policy Goals | 19 |
| Direction 2: Support Indigenous Children and Families | 21 |
| Direction 2 Policy Goals | 23 |
| Direction 3: Expand Equitable Access to Quality Childcare | 24 |
| Direction 3 Policy Goals | 25 |
| Vancouver's Childcare Grant Principles to 2026 | 27 |
| Direction 4: Build Partnerships towards a Universal System | 28 |
| Direction 4 Policy Goals | 30 |
| Direction 5: Support Renewal and Resilience of Essential Childcare Infrastructure | 32 |
| Direction 5 Policy Goals | 33 |
| Conclusion: Shared Tasks Ahead in Building towards a Universal System | 34 |
| Planning and delivering expanded childcare infrastructure | 34 |
| Mobilizing to support senior government investments | 35 |
| Advancing Equitable, Culturally Safe Access to Early Learning and Child Care | 36 |
| First Steps: Early Actions | 37 |

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Vancouver humbly acknowledges that the lands to which the City of Vancouver and Vancouver's childcare strategy applies, occupy the unceded and ancestral territories of the x̱m̱əθḵ'əy̱ əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The Nations have raised children on these lands and waters since time immemorial, and have upheld traditional teachings and ways of knowing, including stewardship of these lands.

Recognizing the lives, cultures, languages, and Peoples of this land, *Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy* will continue to build on the City's commitment as a City of Reconciliation and will seek to meaningfully implement UNDRIP and Truth and Reconciliation calls to justice as they relate to children and childcare.

INTRODUCTION

Towards the Future of Childcare in Vancouver

Making Strides towards a Good Start for All¹

Access to quality childcare supports the well-being of children and families, equitable participation in the labour force, and a thriving economy. The struggle to find suitable childcare is a common experience for many families in Vancouver – and across Canada – who may already be grappling with the challenge of meeting all their essential needs, including access to housing and food security. According to estimates from the City's childcare needs calculator, less than half of families seeking licensed care in Vancouver today can find a full-time spot; meanwhile, the sometimes-prohibitive cost of childcare fees may prevent families from starting their search in the first place.

Childcare is an essential service and primarily a senior government responsibility. A decades-long history of senior government underinvestment in planning, coordination and funding has resulted in large service gaps; recognizing this and the tools available to local government, the City has led the way in supporting childcare and non-profit sector delivery partners. City-facilitated spaces now comprise the majority (60%) of licensed full-day group care in Vancouver for children under three, and make up nearly half (46%) of all full-day group care spaces for children younger than school age.

Right now, senior governments are developing strategies to implement transformative new childcare commitments that promise to make positive changes to the childcare landscape in the decades ahead. However, there is much to be done before all families will be able reliably gain access to licensed childcare, in the same way that they can currently rely on gaining access to public education. The City is in a unique position to help foster this transformation through its breadth of experience, partnerships, and tools to help accelerate the expansion of childcare facility infrastructure in Vancouver.

¹ Vancouver's Healthy City Strategy (2014) policy framework identified A Good Start, including access to childcare and school readiness, as one of the key building blocks of a healthy city for all.

Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy builds on Vancouver's history of setting forward-thinking direction in childcare policy that helps to address local needs of children and families, from the *Civic Childcare Strategy* (1990), to the *Vancouver Children's Policy* (1992) and *Moving Forward – Childcare: A Cornerstone of Child Development Services* (2002). The Strategy builds on current research and engagement, provides an updated policy framework to guide City involvement in supporting childcare, and identifies early actions to move the work forward, while aligning with senior government leadership towards building a universal childcare system. Its vision is to work towards a future where all Vancouver families can access affordable, quality and inclusive childcare to work, learn, or meet daily needs as part of a universal, public system that lifts up all families. Five supporting policy directions are explored in this document:

1. **Plan for Expanded Childcare in Complete Neighbourhoods**
2. **Support Indigenous Children and Families**
3. **Expand Equity and Accessibility of Quality Early Learning and Childcare**
4. **Build Partnerships towards a Universal System**
5. **Support Renewal and Resilience of Essential Childcare Infrastructure**

KEY COMMITMENTS FROM THE CANADA-BC CANADA-WIDE ELCC AGREEMENT, 2021-2026

Canada-BC/Canada-Wide Vision

All families in Canada have access to high-quality, affordable, flexible and inclusive childcare no matter where they live, primarily through non-profit and public care providers as the core focus

- **Affordability**

Reduce BC parent fees by 50% by the end of 2022 for regulated licensed childcare for under 6; and \$10 a day childcare for all regulated 0-5 spaces by the end of the 5-year agreement

- **Quality**

Develop a wage grid for ECEs in BC, and develop evidence-based frameworks, standards and tools for childcare

- **Inclusion**

Combine funding to expand supports for Indigenous-led childcare and for children with support needs through developed plans and collaboration with identified groups most in need (vulnerable and diverse populations; those that need culturally appropriate care; culturally safe childcare for Indigenous children; and official language minority communities)

- **Accessibility**

Create 30,000 new spaces in BC for children under 6 by 2025; and 40,000 spaces by 2027-2028

Achieving the vision, directions and aligned policy goals in this Strategy will require coordinated efforts across City departments and agencies, with partners across sectors and levels of government. The Strategy harmonizes with the upcoming proposed *Vancouver Plan and Accessibility Strategy*, and aligns with key City Strategies or City-affiliated plans including: the *Healthy City Strategy* (2014); *City of Reconciliation* (2016); *Community and Economic Development Strategy* (2016); *Women's Equity Strategy* (2018); *Climate Emergency Action Plan* (2020); *Equity Framework* (2021); *Spaces to Thrive* (2022), *Broadway Plan* (2022) and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation's *Community Centre Strategy* (2022). The Childcare Strategy is also intended to work alongside and support senior government policies and agreements, including the *Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement 2021-2026 (Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement)*, Childcare BC (2018), and BC's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan (2022).

Why Childcare Matters

The term “Early Learning and Child Care” (ELCC) refers to the dual purpose of all licensed childcare:

- i) To provide early learning opportunities to children prior to school age (and to elementary-school children outside school hours); and
- ii) To provide care for children, enabling families to participate in the labour force, pursue education and training, etc.

Access to quality childcare can support healthy outcomes for Vancouver's youngest residents and help build resilience in children throughout their lives. Participation in high-quality early care and learning programs has been shown to support children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development and they age, improving school readiness, and preventing future vulnerability. Working towards universal childcare access is critical to a more equitable future. While there are clear benefits for all children, the greatest benefits of quality childcare are felt by children who face additional challenges, reducing the “achievement gap” between these children and their peers.



Why Childcare Matters (Cont'd)

For families today, access to affordable quality childcare enables entry (or re-entry) to the workforce or educational pursuits, which can help lift families and children out of poverty and advance intergenerational well-being. An inability to access childcare – whether due to lack of supply, high fees, unsuitable options, or other reasons – disproportionately affects women, with the greatest effects felt by lone parents and women from equity-denied communities who are over-represented in low wage and precarious work. In a universal system of care, access to childcare will not be dependent on labour force participation, but will be readily available to all children and families.

Access to quality childcare also supports the economy as a whole, enabling a strong and supported workforce. Research consistently shows that public investment in childcare returns its value many times over through higher employment earnings and taxes paid by working parents, and reduced social welfare use in the short and long terms.



Supply, Need, Service and Equity Gaps

In BC, licensed childcare is regulated by the Provincial government, and offers service to children up to age twelve. In the absence of a universal childcare system, The City models existing childcare needs and shortfalls to inform planning and policy development. The City, using a conservative methodology that considers child population by age, women's workforce participation², and projected enrollment trends by age group, and supply of licenced spaces. Based on assumptions of demand and uptake, the City's childcare estimates indicate that to meet current needs, Vancouver's childcare supply would need to grow by approximately 16,000 spaces: 7,500 full-day spaces for children between 0-5 years, and 8,500 spaces for school-age children. By contrast, a universal public childcare system will operate similarly to public education, where a childcare space will be available to any child; in a universal system, we would expect childcare demand to increase substantially.

Supply of full-day licensed childcare care falls short of estimated need in every age group. This gap is greatest for children under age three, and for school-age children. Reflecting changing employment patterns for parents of young children, the only category of care with an estimated oversupply is part-time, part-day "preschool" serving ages three to five.

² A StatsCan study on gender and work shows that the total work burden for men and women in Canada were approximately equal at the time of writing in 2018. However, while men have taken on more unpaid work than before, including childcare, the study found that women continue to take on a disproportionately large share of all unpaid work, including child care, domestic tasks and elder care. (Moyser, M. and Burlock, A. 2018. "Time use: Total work burden, unpaid work, and leisure", in Women in Canada: A Gender-based Statistical Report. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 89-503-X).

Table 1: Estimated Licensed Childcare Supply, Needs Met and Shortfall (December, 2021)

| Age Group | # of Licensed Spaces | Estimated Spaces Needed | Estimated % of Need Met | Estimated Shortfall of Spaces |
|--|----------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Full-Day Care (ages 0 to 5 year) | 5,968 | 13,134 | 45% | 7,166 |
| Part-Day Pre-School (ages 3-4 years) | 2,463 | 1,276 | 193% | -1,187 |
| School Age Care (ages 5-12 years) | 5,640 | 14,079 | 40% | 8,439 |

Supply, Need, Service and Equity Gaps (Cont'd)

Access to childcare is not equitable for all families. Supply gaps are generally widest on the east side of Vancouver, including low availability of childcare spaces in neighbourhoods where families earn on average lower household incomes than in the City as a whole, and where more residents are visible minorities, Indigenous or newcomers. For families who need childcare to meet daily needs, issues of the barriers to accessing safe and suitable, including availability, high fees, and ongoing challenges for families wishing to access additional supports, steady care compound other challenges and may contribute to decisions to leave Vancouver. Housing affordability affects families as well as the childcare workforce, which faces a critical shortage of qualified workers in Vancouver, whose wages on average cannot keep up with rising housing costs.

For many Indigenous families, finding culturally safe childcare that supports strong cultural identity can be a barrier to access. The National Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework (2018) recognizes the importance of culturally-safe ELCC for connecting urban Indigenous children to their languages and cultures as outlined by UNDRIP and Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. While many Indigenous families report preferring Indigenous-led childcare services, supply is very limited.



City Role in Childcare to date

Since the 1970s, in the absence of senior government leadership, the City of Vancouver has set forward-thinking childcare directions for Vancouver, recognizing the local needs of children, families, and the economy. As outlined in the Vancouver's Children's Policy (1992), "despite traditional mandates, municipal governments [recognize] that their cities will not flourish if children's needs are not met".



During the decades of limited senior government coordination and grant funding for childcare, the City stepped forward to facilitate the development of a core supply of stable, secured licensed group childcare facilities, supporting access to quality childcare for local families, capacity-building of the non-profit sector, and advocating greater involvement of senior governments in childcare. In order to maintain a consistent standard across childcare facilities, Council adopted the Childcare Design Guidelines in the 1990's, an evidence-based design document that links physical design elements to key child development outcomes.

Process quality, fundamentally linked to staff qualifications and training, morale, as well as pedagogically sound and culturally safe curricula, and healthy food provisions in programs, is supported by City grants and nominal leases, which promote stable, resilient and inclusive non-profit childcare operations. While City impacts have been significant, there is much more to be done to support access to quality care, particularly for children with additional support needs, and for children and families from equity-denied groups.



INVESTMENT IN QUALITY CHILDCARE INFRASTRUCTURE

Since the late 1970s, City investments and partnerships have facilitated the creation of more than 4,500 licensed non-profit childcare spaces in Vancouver, with a focus on purpose-built full-day care serving children younger than school age. These spaces have offered quality and inclusive care at fees that fall generally below the citywide average, made possible through non-profit operation, the offer of stable tenure in facilities that are secured for childcare use over the long-term and, in most cases, affordable leases at nominal rates. These include over 1,300 childcare spaces now operating in City-facilitated amenity spaces, delivered through development partnerships, mostly in areas of high density and high growth areas. 300+ additional spaces in developer-led projects are currently under construction.

City and partner investments have also successfully leveraged civic and other public lands to deliver essential childcare infrastructure in neighbourhoods across the city. Over 1600 licensed childcare spaces are located in or adjacent to Community Centres owned by Vancouver's Board of Parks and Recreation. Through partnership with the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE), co-location of new childcare centres with new and seismic-replacement elementary and secondary schools has delivered over 250 full-day licensed childcare spaces since 2018, with another 233 full-day childcare spaces currently under development in school projects.



PLANNING AND REGULATION

The City first established a citywide childcare space expansion target to guide City investment in childcare creation as part of the 2004-2007 capital plan. Targets were re-established in 2010, and continue to the present day. Since 2010, local community plans and area plans have typically included planning considerations for childcare needs, and in some cases, neighbourhood-level childcare targets.

Facility design standards are applied to newly constructed, purpose-built group childcare centres, through the City's Childcare Design Guidelines (2021), to support children's healthy development. Childcare Technical Guidelines (last updated in 2019) apply to childcare facilities secured by the City as a capital asset, to ensure standards of sustainability, functionality, and efficient maintenance. Group childcare is permitted in most zones in the City as a conditional use. As Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is responsible for licensing childcare facilities according to Provincial health and safety regulations, the City works with VCH to mutually support and align regulatory reviews of new childcare proposals.

LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND ADVOCACY

Building on the Civic Childcare Strategy (1990), the City has convened partners across sectors to support childcare creation, equitable access, and a strong non-profit sector. Key partnerships have included the following:

Local public partners – namely the Vancouver Board of Education (VBE), and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation (VBPR) – have convened joint efforts to deliver secured affordable childcare on public land, including on land and facilities owned and stewarded by the City, the VBE, and VBPR. The policy framework Moving Forward – Childcare: A Cornerstone of Child Development Services (2002) led to foundation of the Joint Council on Childcare (JCC) in 2004 by the City of Vancouver, VBE, and VBPR.³ The JCC was mandated to lead planning, development, and coordination of childcare with a focus on publicly owned facilities or land. Most recently, the City has engaged in new partnerships in the public health sector and with BC Housing to explore joint planning opportunities.

The development industry has been a key partner in childcare infrastructure expansion. The 1990 Civic Childcare Strategy and Action Plan established a process for the City's use of Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) and Development Cost Levies (DCLs) to fund childcare capital.

The non-profit sector has been a key partner in childcare service delivery and coordination since the 1970s. The City's childcare funding supports (including operational and capital grants, and leases offered at nominal rates in City-owned facilities) have helped to build capacity within the non-profit childcare sector in Vancouver, and have enabled operators to offer inclusive programs at more affordable fees to meet diverse community needs. Since 1990, the City of Vancouver has provided grants to non-profit operators increase the affordability, accessibility, quality and resilience of neighbourhood-based, non-profit childcare programs. In 2021, the City's total childcare grants budget was approximately \$1.7 million, and the City offered nominal leases to non-profit operators of childcare facilities representing over 2,000 licensed spaces, as well as a number of nominal land leases where non-profit-owned childcare facilities are located on public land.

Since the 1990s, the City and its partners have engaged in ongoing advocacy for senior government to lead the development of a coordinated universal public childcare system. City Council has endorsed the community-led Community Plan for a Public System of Early Care and Learning (\$10aDay Plan) twice - in 2011 and 2021.

³ The Joint Council on Childcare (JCC) was established in 2004 through the Joint Civic Childcare protocol. Following a hiatus from 2006-2008, the JCC was reinstated by City Council in 2009. The JCC continues to provide leadership in seeking resources, planning, development, and coordination of childcare, and to advise the City, VBE and VBPR.

Looking Ahead to the Future of Childcare

Canada has historically underinvested in childcare relative to other OECD countries, including the USA. Provincial governments are responsible for licensing and funding childcare.

Before 2018, British Columbia did not have a coordinated childcare creation plan in place, and offered modest affordability supports to families. Childcare space creation was left to the market, where the role of facility building has been taken up by municipalities, neighbourhood houses and other non-profit facilities, as well as by for-profit businesses. A market-based “patchwork system” left large gaps in childcare supply and accessibility relative to families’ needs.



Senior Government Commitments and Priorities since 2018

Senior government childcare commitments and priorities have shifted significantly since 2018. The ChildCare BC Plan (2018) first set a Provincial goal of universal, \$10-per-day childcare in BC, and launched modest capital investments and affordability measures which helped to support the creation of over 26,700 new licensed spaces in the province between 2018 and 2021.⁴

The COVID-19 pandemic forced widespread disruptions to lifestyle, workplace and school arrangements, highlighting the critical importance of childcare; as a result, the Province declared childcare an essential service in 2020. Shifting responsibility for childcare from the Ministry of Children and Family Development to the Ministry of Education and Child Care in 2022 positioned childcare as a universal core service in BC, and opened the door to new possibilities for integrating early learning within education infrastructure.

⁴ Ministry of Children and Family Development, 2021. “New child care legislation will build stronger B.C. for families”. <https://news.gov.bc.ca/25630>.

Senior Government Commitments and Priorities since 2018 (Cont'd)

Federal and provincial commitments aligned for the first time in 2021 on the shared goal of universal childcare for children under age six. The historic Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement (2021-2026) identified steps towards an equitable system, setting affordability objectives for families at \$10 per day by 2026, and committing to a focus on expansion of public and not-for-profit service delivery. Based on population, Vancouver's portion of the new BC-wide space creation target will be approximately 4,000 spaces for children younger than school age, by 2028.

While many details of senior government approaches to building a childcare system are still unfolding, it is clear that senior governments seek to share costs and responsibility for creating and securing childcare infrastructure with other partners. Capital funding commitments identified in the Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement surpass all previous senior government investments, but fall short of capital construction costs for new facilities, particularly in urban contexts. Partners' relative roles and investments in new childcare facility infrastructure will likely continue to evolve as a new system emerges.

Shifting Perspectives on Childcare in Vancouver

This is a unique period for securing the future of childcare in Vancouver, and for the City to lay out a renewed platform to guide its role and investments in childcare delivery. Over the coming decades, there is potential to fill large gaps in infrastructure and systems capacity while advancing senior government-led goals of universal access to quality, licensed childcare. The policy framework outlined in *Making Strides: Vancouver's Childcare Strategy* positions the City to address and leverage emerging opportunities and challenges while navigating the transformations ahead.

PAST PERSPECTIVES

The City is working within a patchwork system of care

Childcare is delivered through the private market or as an amenity through development

Childcare is a social program that benefits only a few



MOVING TOWARDS

There are clear and well-balanced City roles in investments, regulation and partnerships - within an ecosystem.

Childcare is intentionally planned, essential infrastructure

Childcare is a universal service that expands public education to include the early years, and enables labour force participation for parents

Shifting Perspectives on Childcare in Vancouver (Cont'd)

As senior governments lay the groundwork for an emerging universal childcare system, all partners and levels of government have begun to shift their perspectives in consideration of childcare in their policies and planning. In the historical “patchwork system” of childcare, cities and other partners have delivered significant but uneven impacts, without the benefits of clear coordination from senior governments. Childcare infrastructure has also been viewed as a beneficial nicety (and sometimes as a market commodity) and, as a result, is frequently planned for as an afterthought, rather than with an intention to meet essential needs. Finally, in the past, childcare has been conceived of as a social program that only benefits vulnerable populations, rather than as a necessity akin to public education, one that holds benefits for the broad community.

These new, emerging perspectives require adjustments across planning processes, departments, and partnerships that work together to plan and deliver childcare facilities and services in the city.

What We Heard

This policy framework and embedded early actions has been informed by a targeted engagement with approximately 40 organizations, intergovernmental and community agencies.

The City of Vancouver recognizes and thanks participating community bodies including:

- A Community Advisory Panel comprised of local experts and intergovernmental representatives;
- Joint Council on Childcare;
- Child Care Administrators' Network;
- Diverse childcare providers;
- The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade;
- Other intergovernmental, development, and community partners; and
- Internal staff across City departments and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation





What We Heard (Cont'd)

Key thematic findings from engagement with the non-profit childcare sector have included:

- Working together is better
- Capacity building requires support
- The early childhood educator staffing crisis cannot be ignored
- Affordability is a barrier for all
- Relationship building is foundational

Beyond dedicated engagement, findings to inform this strategy have drawn from other engagement data across various policy development processes, including the upcoming proposed Vancouver Plan and the Women's Equity Strategy (2018).

Key findings from survey comments, forums, and in-person pre-pandemic engagement have echoed long-standing challenges in the sector, including:

- There is an insufficient supply of licensed spaces
- Childcare remains unaffordable for many
- Women disproportionately bear economic impacts of raising children, and lose out on labour force participation
- Quality of care is a key concern for supporting healthy child development, and for addressing specific needs and inequities including cultural safety and additional support needs.



Introducing the Childcare Strategy Policy Framework

The Vision, Values and Principles of this Strategy Policy Framework that will guide the efforts of the City are articulated below.

Vision

10-YEAR VISION

- Significantly more families have equitable access to essential \$10 a Day childcare services that meet their needs within a more family-friendly city.
- The City helps to coordinate senior government capital investments in childcare space expansion, regulate childcare development, and continues to collaborate with public partners and the local non-profit sector.

30-YEAR VISION

- All Vancouver families can access affordable, quality and inclusive childcare to work, learn, or meet other daily needs as part of a universal, public system.
- The City continues to collaborate with community, and liaises with senior governments to ensure that Vancouver-specific needs are acknowledged and fulfilled.

Values

Availability:

Families who need or want childcare across Vancouver neighbourhoods should be able to choose from a range of quality options available to them.

Quality:

Child-centered programs and facilities can meet diverse needs and nurture healthier outcomes for all children in both physical design and services provided.

Accessibility:

Children and families of all circumstances, needs and abilities need access to quality childcare.

Equity:

Families need to be able to access childcare that meets their specific, intersectional needs and supports their workforce participation.

Well-being:

Children and families need to feel safe, recognized, and respected in all childcare environments. Vancouver's youngest residents are supported to meet their full potential.

Connections:

Childcare is well-integrated with families' cultural, social and economic lives, and not planned as a standalone service.



Principles



Childcare as an Integrated City Priority

- Early Learning and Childcare is a child's right,⁵ an essential service and foundational City priority.
- The City is working toward a universal \$10-a-day system, aligned with senior governments.
- The City integrates childcare planning and implementation across processes and departments, and works to streamline systems.



Reconciliation in Planning and Action

- Indigenous communities have the right to self-determination in childcare services and this includes Urban Indigenous people, Metis, Inuit and First Nations.
- Indigenous families have the right to access Indigenous-led programs that reflect their cultures, or to access culturally safe childcare in the broader community.
- City actions will align with calls to action outlined in the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG2S), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act (DRIPA) in BC, and other calls for justice.



Equitable Access Using an Equity Lens

- Diverse children and families have the right to access inclusive and culturally safe early learning and childcare that supports healthy child development and families.
- The City applies an equity lens to planning for childcare, working to reduce inequities in access across intersections including race, gender, ability, and geography.
- The City applies a proportionate universality approach to operational supports. Working toward the goal of universal access, City investments in operational supports may be targeted to support those who face the most barriers in accessing care.

⁵ The 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child established that governments should ensure families have the right to benefit from childcare services, and addressed children as rights bearers. The Vancouver Children's Policy (1992) responded by recognizing children's rights to "access to high quality, community-based services that are culturally appropriate, child-centred, affordable and non-stigmatizing".



Civic Focus on Non-profit Service Delivery and Expansion

- Focusing civic supports on non-profit childcare operations aligns with senior government commitments to focus childcare space creation “in community investments that are long term and run by public and non-profit institutions”.



Coordinated Public Planning, Investment, and Public Land for Public Good

- The City convenes local public partners and senior government agencies to align childcare planning, investments, and infrastructure to support an expanding universal system.
- Land and Sites: Public assets are leveraged for childcare infrastructure planning, and delivery
- Capital Planning: Public agencies coordinate spatial, infrastructure and capital planning.
- Policy Alignment: Networks across governments and public partners align policies and programs.



Coordinated Service Delivery through Neighbourhood Networks

- The City supports a model of building capacity of small and larger non-profit operators in ‘neighbourhood networks’ to facilitate childcare space expansion and moving towards a universal system.
- Coordinated services integrate care across neighbourhoods, including through multi-service hubs.
- Families benefit from continuity of care and connection to broader supports and services.



DIRECTION 1:

Plan for Expanded Childcare in Complete Neighbourhoods

Having access to quality childcare options is an important key that enables Vancouver families to thrive. In planning for a future where every family in Vancouver can access a suitable licensed childcare space, expanding physical childcare infrastructure will be a critical challenge.

This policy direction positions the City to enable childcare infrastructure delivery. Infrastructure expansion can be most effective if the City focuses its efforts on facilities for children ages 0-5 years, while supporting its partners (including Boards of Education) as they expand the supply of school-age childcare. In alignment with senior governments, City investments will focus on supporting and securing not-for-profit childcare delivery. Through regulation, partnerships and ongoing engagement with partners & the public, the City aims to create favourable conditions to enable all types of licensed childcare to fit within or alongside a senior government-led universal system.

To create space and opportunity for quality childcare infrastructure expansion, the City will build on established partnerships and maintain the use of current tools (such as zoning, financing growth, and land-use plans), while broadening its policy and regulatory approaches in alignment with senior government policies and goals. The City will continue to value development industry partnerships and to apply financing growth tools as key components of a broader childcare delivery strategy. Diversified municipal approaches will include exploring opportunities to support and secure community ownership of childcare, and to encourage creation of new, secured childcare facilities, through policies and regulatory tools.





BIG STRIDES AHEAD – CHANGING APPROACHES TO CITY CHILDCARE TARGETS AND GOALS

Childcare space creation targets set by City Council guide development of new City-secured spaces. Currently, Council sets a citywide, four-year space target in coordination with the City's four-year capital plans for City investment. Going forward, an updated approach to setting and monitoring childcare expansion targets will reflect changing City roles. Future implementation will include the development of new City-led target as well as a broader childcare space goal for the city, as follows:

- Target for space creation achieved primarily through City investment (as previously established, this target will be coordinated with the development of each 4-year Capital Plan)
- Goal for childcare space creation enabled by the community, in alignment with broader senior government targets and reflecting City planning, regulation, and investment. (To be developed together with emerging senior government targets and funding models)

In the coming days, as senior governments lay the groundwork for a universal childcare system, the City's roles in demand modelling, land-use planning and regulation will continue be essential to meet local childcare space goals. This may include planning to ensure co-location and inclusion of childcare in suitable development opportunities, and prioritizing expansion in neighbourhoods and populations with the greatest childcare needs. The City's role as a regulator will support delivery of safe, well-designed centres. As a key partner and licensing authority for the region, Vancouver Coastal Health has demonstrated willingness to work with City departments to align and streamline approval processes so that developments can be reviewed and permitted as efficiently as possible.



The Policy Goals and Early Actions below outline steps for the City, working with key partners, to plan for and facilitate growth in childcare infrastructure to meet community needs.

Direction 1 Policy Goals

1A. ENGAGE IN COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING, TO LOCATE CHILDCARE WITH HOUSING, SCHOOLS AND JOBS

Childcare is an essential service that performs optimally when delivered alongside housing, schools and jobs. A renewed focus on comprehensive, integrated childcare planning enables families across the city to have good access to childcare, supporting equity for families. Ongoing engagement with local communities and childcare providers will help identify changing needs and barriers to access. Community plans and policy initiatives will seek to ensure that a range of suitable childcare options - offering a variety of program types and facility sizes - can be delivered in different building types to meet City objectives and local community needs.

1B. SECURE NOT-FOR-PROFIT CHILDCARE PROGRAMS WHERE NEEDED MOST

Moving forward, the City will aim its resources towards supporting a senior government-led creation of a universal system, with a focus on space creation through “community investments that are long term and run by public and non-profit institutions”.⁶ City efforts will primarily support the delivery of full-day programs that have secured childcare use for the long-term, and operate within an emerging senior government-led universal system, with a focus on the most underserved infant and toddler ages. Allocation of City resources will consider investments in cost-effective childcare infrastructure to address immediate needs, while prioritizing longer-term sustainable facility models where feasible.

⁶ This space creation focus is committed in the Canada-British Columbia Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement – 2021 to 2026
<https://www.canada.ca/en/early-learning-child-care-agreement/agreements-provinces-territories/british-columbia-canada-wide-2021.html>

1C. EMPLOY AND DEVELOP DIVERSE TOOLS TO SUPPORT THE EXPANSION OF CHILDCARE INFRASTRUCTURE

The City will develop a broad childcare delivery strategy that employs a greater diversity of municipal tools, enabling the City to participate effectively in childcare space creation while balancing civic priorities. Financing growth tools and development industry partnerships will continue to be key components of the City's childcare delivery strategy. The City will also explore new policies and regulatory tools to support development of not-for-profit childcare in City-owned and community-owned facilities. In support of community ownership, clear tools and criteria will enable the City to secure and monitor not-for-profit childcare use committed and delivered in new non-City-owned facilities.

1D. STREAMLINE APPROVALS TO SUPPORT EFFICIENT CHILDCARE DELIVERY

Efficient delivery of safe and quality childcare requires that clear and effective regulatory processes be in place. The City will explore opportunities to expedite and streamline development approvals and regulatory processes to better support childcare delivery and other policy goals. Periodic monitoring and evaluating of the City's childcare approval processes will enable City staff to identify and propose new ways to reduce barriers for applicants. City staff and Provincial childcare licensing officers will continue to collaborate to better align approval processes to optimize efficiency and effectiveness.



DIRECTION 2:

Support Indigenous Children and Families

The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework (co-developed by the federal government and Indigenous Peoples) recognizes the importance of culturally safe early learning and childcare for connecting First Nation, Inuit, and Metis children to their languages and cultures. This approach is emphasized in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action. Most recently, the Province of BC's Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) and its subsequent Action Plan released in 2022 recognizes the rights of all Indigenous people to pursue their own path for childcare and to access culturally safe and appropriate care. In 2020, the City of Vancouver passed a Council Motion to work with Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations (MST) to implement UNDRIP at a local government level, and align City policies with DRIPA and emerging federal legislation.

The Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Framework emphasizes the importance of a distinctions-based approach that respects the specific priorities of First Nations, Inuit and the Metis Nation. While this framework provides a foundation with respect to Indigenous rights and interests, it does not include a vision or approach to delivering childcare for Urban Indigenous Peoples, Inuit and Metis living away from their ancestral lands. Vancouver has the third-largest urban Indigenous population of all cities in Canada. However, access to Indigenous-led or Indigenous-centred childcare programs is extremely limited. As the population of Urban Indigenous children in Vancouver is growing, service gaps for culturally safe and Indigenous-led childcare continue to widen. Many Indigenous families experience systemic racism and barriers when accessing non-Indigenous-led childcare, and express a desire to access diverse childcare options in the community that are culturally safe and accessible.⁷

Building on the City of Reconciliation Framework (2014) and seeking alignment with UNDRIP, the City commits to work closely with MST as well as Urban Indigenous organizations and other partners to support and expand upon the diverse childcare needs of Indigenous children and families. Partnership with local Nations and Urban Indigenous organizations such as MVAEC will remain

⁷ Marjoribanks, I, E. Vese and Sherry Small. 2020. "Children's Voices. Our Choices. Draft Engagement Report." MVAEC. Online.



Direction 2: Support Indigenous Children and Families (Cont'd)

foundational to guiding City policies, programs and investments. These efforts will work towards a future where Indigenous children and families can choose to access Indigenous-led childcare, or alternatively, can access any licensed childcare in their community and feel assured that it will provide a culturally safe setting where their children can thrive and reach their full potential.

In line with UNDRIP principles, the City will work with local Nations to advocate, invest and advance policies to ensure the expansion of a self-determined Indigenous-led early learning and childcare sector that provides culturally anchored programs connecting Indigenous children to their cultural identity and well-being.. City policies and investment will also support cultural safety and humility in the broader childcare sector. All licensed childcare programs will be encouraged to offer programming and curricula that build a shared understanding of Indigenous cultures and histories, and that support intercultural awareness and cultural humility for all children in the community. City policy and planning for childcare to meet the needs of Indigenous children and families will continue to integrate and share data, analysis, and research with Indigenous and other community partners to support equity-based and targeted planning and supports.

The Policy Goals and Early Actions below outline steps for the City, working with key partners, to plan for and support childcare infrastructure and services that meet the needs of Indigenous children and families.



Direction 2 Policy Goals

2A. INTEGRATE DIVERSE INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES IN CHILDCARE POLICY AND PLANNING

The City aims to integrate Indigenous perspectives into all phases of the policy and planning process for childcare to serve Indigenous children and families. The City will build on strong relationships with Musqueam Indian Band, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, Urban Indigenous organizations, and public partners, and will support and work alongside these partners to improve access to early learning and childcare that meets the needs of Indigenous children and families in Vancouver.

2B. SUPPORT EXPANSION AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF INDIGENOUS-LED CHILDCARE THROUGH CITY INVESTMENT AND POLICIES

The City will develop a relationship-based, decolonized approach to supporting Indigenous-led childcare and early learning programs with a focus on urban Indigenous families, to support Indigenous children's positive cultural identity and well-being.

2C. SUPPORT CULTURAL SAFETY FOR INDIGENOUS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

The City will explore ways to support increased cultural safety and cultural humility for Indigenous children and families in all childcare programs. City-supported research, engagement, and policy development will identify and address barriers and gaps faced by Indigenous children and families in accessing diverse childcare in the community that meets their needs.



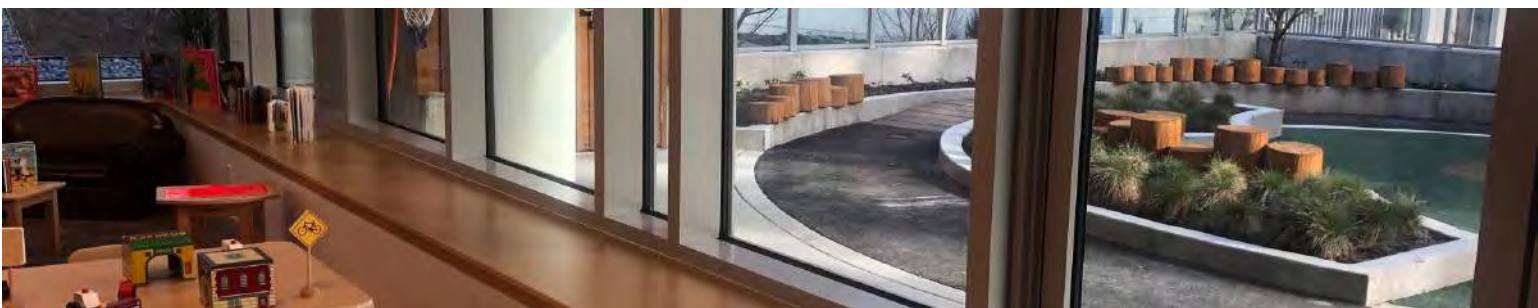
DIRECTION 3:

Expand Equitable Access to Quality Childcare

According to the University of British Columbia's Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) and School of Population and Public Health, truly equitable childcare requires three fundamental things: 1) universal services that support the well-being and healthy development of all children, 2) more focused resources for children/families who have additional cultural, income or support needs, and 3) removing barriers to access.⁸ This approach requires a deeper intersectional understanding of the barriers faced by children and families from equity-denied groups, including children with additional support needs, newcomers and racialized families, and families with lower incomes.

An equitable approach also considers families with non-standard work schedules, as access to childcare is limited by a lack of licensed programs offering flexible services beyond standard weekday hours, and a current staffing shortage in the sector. The City will explore local needs, required supports, and feasibility of supporting increased service delivery with flexible, extended or non-standard hours.

Equitable access to outdoor spaces is also a key concern. In urban environments like Vancouver, licensed outdoor childcare spaces offer the main outdoor play and nature experience for many young children. While 40% of Canadian 3- to 4-year-olds fall short of recommended physical activity levels, enriched outdoor childcare spaces have measurable impact on children's psychological wellbeing, and set the stage for a lifetime of healthy physical activity. With public partners, the City will continue to apply design standards for accessible, quality group childcare facilities, and will support children's access to nature and healthy outdoor activity while maximizing community use and shared access to public resources.



⁸ HELP. 2012. "Research Brief 2012: Address Barriers to Access." UBC. Vancouver, BC.
http://earlylearning.ubc.ca/media/publications/barriers_to_access_brief_final_october_16.pdf

Direction 3: Expand Equitable Access to Quality Childcare (Cont'd)

Finally, the City's childcare granting programs and nominal leases offer support to the local non-profit childcare sector to increase equitable access to quality care. With Provincial funding commitments for a universal childcare system underway, the City will shift its role in operational supports to be more responsive to the specific needs of equity-denied groups, and to focus on reducing barriers to access as a new universal system comes into effect.

Successful implementation of this direction will rely on ongoing research and public outreach and engagement to identify specific community needs, and to draw connections between intersecting issue areas that relate to childcare such as community economic development, the need for healthy food, and strengthening social resilience.

The Policy Goals and Early Actions below outline steps for the City, working with key partners, to facilitate more equitable access to childcare services.

Direction 3 Policy Goals

3A. SEEK TO ENSURE THAT NEW CHILDCARE FACILITIES ARE DESIGNED AND BUILT TO BE BARRIER-FREE AND SUPPORT HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

While children of all abilities can benefit from access to quality barrier-free childcare facilities, barrier-free design is essential to ensuring equitable outcomes for children with additional physical and developmental needs. The City will strive to uphold design standards for barrier-free, quality group childcare facilities.

3B. EXPLORE THE NEEDS FOR FLEXIBLE CHILDCARE SERVICES, INCLUDING SERVICES BEYOND STANDARD WEEKDAY HOURS.

City resources will support exploring local community and employment-based needs, required supports, and feasibility of delivering childcare with flexible, extended or non-standard hours. Building on sectoral engagement and jurisdictional analysis already underway, City efforts will support and align with Provincial directions to include extended hour care within a universal system.



3C. DIRECT CITY OPERATING GRANTS AND NOMINAL LEASES TOWARDS INCREASING EQUITABLE ACCESS

Revising the City's small annual childcare grant budget and major investment in nominal childcare leases to respond more effectively to the current and changing needs of equity-denied groups can help to achieve goals of more equitable access. Grant funding will continue to offer a combination of targeted supports for children with higher vulnerability and investment in projects that build resilience & innovation in Vancouver's childcare sector, which has been struggling with the effects of COVID and a concurrent workforce crisis.

New short-term principles for a revised childcare granting program up to 2026 are included below, and mirror changes that place equity principles at the centre of all of the City's grant-making.⁹ Related early actions in support of building capacity in the non-profit childcare sector are outlined under Direction 4, Policy Goal C.

3D. PROMOTE MORE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO NATURE

Ample access to nature in age-appropriate outdoor spaces is essential to ensuring equitable child development. This is particularly important in areas of high-density living and low access to parks and green space. Alongside an ongoing dialogue with public partners, the City will continue to apply design standards to support children's access to nature and outdoor activity while maximizing community use and shared access to public resources including granting public access to childcare outdoor play spaces where appropriate and feasible.



⁹ The impetus for this change has been the City Council-approved Equity Framework. The Framework lays the foundation for departmental action planning and for culture change within the City of Vancouver as an organization. It has led to shifts within all of Arts, Culture and Community Services' granting practices to take a more systemic approach and address funding barriers and increase access to programs and services within the city for those who have been most underserved. The Council-approved City of Reconciliation framework, and Healthy City Strategy have also shaped this work.

VANCOUVER'S CHILDCARE GRANT PRINCIPLES TO 2026

The childcare sector is anticipating significant changes and increased fee affordability as a result of the BC-Canada Bilateral Agreement, which will provide funding for childcare as a core service, and create \$10-a-day childcare spaces. The short term granting principles below will shape the City's childcare operating grants, which are disbursed annually during this period of major transition.

Equity-focused

Equity principles will be at the centre of all granting programs. In terms of the City's childcare funding, an equity approach focuses on three areas:

- 1) Increasing childcare access for children from families with low incomes. UBC's Early Development Instrument (EDI) has found that socio-economic status is the most significant predictor of vulnerability.
- 2) Investing in improved access and culturally appropriate programs that honour and support Urban Indigenous children and Indigenous-led early learning and care programs.
- 3) Understanding and reducing barriers to childcare access for BPOC (Black and People of Colour) communities and other equity-denied groups, including children with disabilities and their families. Ensuring culturally appropriate care is key to this focus area as well.

Time-sensitive

Provincial and Federal commitments for a universal childcare system promise a new childcare funding model by 2026. The City's childcare grants policies and investments will be closely monitored and frequently adjusted anticipating a change in City investments by this timeline.

Strategic

Childcare operating grants will maximize the City's unique role as a landlord and funder to deepen childcare affordability for families with the most barriers accessing services. City dollars will seek to focus on enhancing equity goals to increase access for the most disadvantaged, so may leverage provincially funded projects and services that are focused on a universal approach. City grants will aim to align with provincial and federal commitments for a universal childcare system and the principles outlined in the \$10aDay childcare plan.

Responsive

Recognizing that the Provincial and Federal governments hold the main responsibility for childcare funding, adjust operational funding to meet the unmet and immediate needs of Vancouver's families and non-profit early learning and childcare sector.



DIRECTION 4:

Build Partnerships towards a Universal System

The City is committed to building partnerships to support and facilitate senior government-led and Indigenous-led implementation of a universal system.

The City and provincial partners have worked together closely to advance shared childcare goals since the launch of Childcare BC in 2018. Recognizing the City's unique partnerships and planning capacity, the Province and City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding in 2019, securing \$33 million in provincial investment and setting additional targets for infrastructure expansion in Vancouver. A 2019 agreement between the Province, Metro Vancouver Aboriginal Executive Council (MVAEC), and the City funded a dedicated Early Learning and Childcare Planner to support urban Indigenous children and families.

The City will continue to work with local government organizations and local partners in close collaboration with the BC Ministry of Education and Child Care, and to advocate addressing local childcare needs within an unfolding universal system. This includes ensuring that senior government investments respond to the unique needs of urban Indigenous children and families, and to the needs of diverse communities and equity-denied groups. Advocacy and information sharing will support senior governments to recognize the higher cost of facility construction and renewal in urban contexts within capital funding programs. The City will continue to collaborate with local partners to advocate for systems change and quality measures to support children and the childcare workforce.



Direction 4: Build Partnerships towards a Universal System (Cont'd)

In the transition to a senior government-led universal childcare system, Vancouver will need to expand on existing partnerships and build new communication channels across sectors and levels of government to aim to ensure that Vancouver-specific needs are acknowledged and met. The City will convene local public partners, community organizations, and Indigenous-led early learning and care organizations to share deep knowledge of local community needs, gaps, and innovations, and to engage in local policy development and joint planning, aligned with Provincial directions. The City will support information-sharing between partners about opportunities and good practices for childcare delivery, including integrated planning and design, and potential to build capacity and support infrastructure delivery through funding opportunities or philanthropy. New partnerships may lead naturally to new co-location opportunities, where childcare services can offer compounding benefits across partner priorities, such as increasing public access or exploring shared spaces.

Finally, a functioning childcare system will require strong partnerships with the non-profit childcare sector. BC soon faces the enormous challenge of coordinating, staffing, administering, starting up and operating a rapidly expanded number of childcare programs, exacerbated by a nation-wide shortage of qualified staff. Across the Province, and in Vancouver, non-profit childcare operators will be called on to help meet these challenges. The City of Vancouver's long history of convening and supporting the non-profit childcare sector (through grants and non-profit space creation) has led to increased capacity of the sector to expertly manage quality and inclusive services that respond to ever-changing local needs. For the next few years, it will be important to ensure that the City continues to play these key roles supporting the local non-profit childcare sector, as the new BC system unfolds across the province.





Policy Goals and Early Actions below outline steps for the City to build partnerships towards a universal childcare system.

Direction 4 Policy Goals

4A. ADVOCATE FULL INVESTMENT IN A UNIVERSAL CHILDCARE SYSTEM BY SENIOR GOVERNMENTS

The City of Vancouver remains committed to supporting the development of quality, affordable and accessible childcare. Through ongoing partnerships and advocacy, the City will support and advocate the establishment of stronger senior government policies and investments to create a childcare system that meets community needs. The City will remain a key partner in supporting the Province to implement a universal system of early learning and care in Vancouver.



Direction 4 Policy Goals (Cont'd)

4B. BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO ALIGN CHILDCARE PLANNING AND FACILITY DELIVERY

The rollout of a Provincially-led and -funded universal childcare system will require strong partnerships with senior governments, local First Nations, public partners, and urban Indigenous, Metis and Inuit organizations, not-for-profit societies and developers, to land on creative solutions for developing and expanding childcare programs within Vancouver. The City will support integrated planning and delivery between partners, facilitating co-location of not-for-profit childcare with public facilities, non-market housing, social infrastructure, and other development projects. Strong partnerships will support a smoother and more community-responsive transition to a fully integrated system.

The Vancouver Childcare Council, formerly known as the Joint Council on Childcare, will remain a key partnership platform and advisory body to support this transition. For geographic clarity in Province-wide discussions, the JCC will be renamed beginning in its 2023-26 term.

4C. CONTINUE TO BUILD CAPACITY IN THE LOCAL NON-PROFIT CHILDCARE SECTOR.

Non-profit childcare providers operate over 60% of Vancouver's licensed childcare spaces, the highest concentration of not-for-profit-delivered childcare in the province. The City of Vancouver has been a leader in supporting the development of strong organizations, building on childcare policy that emphasizes capacity building through hubs and networks, as well as through resource-sharing organizations such as Westcoast Childcare Resource Centre Society.

The next phase of childcare planning requires continued investment in the future of the non-profit sector, recognizing that this sector is highly sensitive to change and experiencing a workforce crisis. The City will continue to support capacity investments which align with the rollout of a universal system, and which build resilience within the non-profit childcare sector.

¹⁰ <https://council.vancouver.ca/20040309/p1.htm>

DIRECTION 5:

Support Renewal and Resilience of Essential Childcare Infrastructure

Childcare is a cornerstone of a neighbourhood's cultural, social and economic life, helping to build community resilience in children and families. When a needed childcare centre closes without continuity of care for enrolled children, effects are felt across the community, with immediate impacts on children's well-being and families' access to employment. The City aims to support sustainability and resilience of the childcare supply through careful management of civic infrastructure and seeking solutions to mitigate displacement of essential childcare programs in the community.

Locating childcare in civic facilities is a step towards childcare security – helping to ensure the long-term use of this essential service for families, and to provide stability to non-profit operators. In Vancouver, more than half of licensed group care spaces for children ages 0-12 operate from buildings and lands that are owned or managed by local public partners (including the City of Vancouver, Vancouver Board of Education, Conseil scolaire francophone, and Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation). This achievement reflects long-standing commitments by the City and other public partners to support and retain these local services, building on the Child Care Protocol (2004)¹⁰. As civic-facilitated childcare centres reach the end of their lives, the City will work with partners to retain, replace or expand childcare program capacity where needed. These efforts will be supported by advocating senior governments for childcare funding commitments to address ongoing, critical needs for capital maintenance and eventual replacement.



Direction 5: Support Renewal and Resilience of Essential Childcare Infrastructure (Cont'd)

The City will also explore opportunities to monitor and mitigate the displacement of childcare programs in non-civic facilities across Vancouver. Displacement of childcare through redevelopment most frequently affects childcare facilities where childcare use is not secured, and where services are accessed through the private market. In alignment with Policy Direction 1 above, the City will support community, non-profit ownership of new, secured childcare facilities, in alignment with senior government priorities. To reduce potential displacement of essential childcare in the future, the City will develop tools to help secure ongoing childcare use in non-City-owned facilities supported by City programs or investments.

The Policy Goals and Early Actions below outline steps for the City, working with key partners, to plan for and support renewal and resilience of essential childcare infrastructure.

Direction 5 Policy Goals

5A. SUPPORT LONG-TERM SUSTAINABILITY OF CIVIC-LED CHILDCARE INFRASTRUCTURE.

Together with local partners, the City will work to retain, replace and expand childcare co-located with civic land or civic-led facilities. City investments in childcare infrastructure renewal or replacement will address design gaps and seek to right-size facilities where feasible, such as by adding needed infant and toddler programs.

5B. IDENTIFY MEANS TO MITIGATE THE IMPACTS RESULTING FROM DISPLACEMENT OF NEEDED CHILDCARE.

Understanding the forces and scope of displacement of needed group childcare programs in the community is a challenge for the City and other partners in childcare planning. City staff monitoring community-serving spaces found that 133 licensed childcare spaces co-located with places of worship were displaced in 2018 and 2019 due to redevelopment or eviction after sale of the facility. Going forward, the City will work towards developing increased capacity to track and address loss of needed group childcare through displacement and redevelopment. Related actions will require a longer time frame to scope and implement, to allow the City response to build on emerging provincial policies.



CONCLUSION:

Shared Tasks Ahead in Building a Universal System

Over the coming decade, the City and key partners face essential shared tasks to secure the future of childcare in Vancouver.

Planning and delivering expanded childcare infrastructure

For children younger than school age, the Canada-Wide ELCC Agreement sets a key objective to secure new spaces within the next decade that will help fill most of the current service gap. Current provincial and federal capital funding commitments surpass the limited previous senior government investments, but remain well below capital construction costs for new childcare facilities. This funding gap is particularly acute in urban contexts like Vancouver, where land prices are higher, land availability is limited, and higher-density mixed-use development patterns may require more complex design and construction.

Over the past three decades, the City of Vancouver and the development industry have been key partners and investors in delivering new childcare facilities in Vancouver through applying limited financing growth tools. Since 2011, 48% of all new licensed full day group care spaces serving children younger than school age in Vancouver were facilitated by the City of Vancouver and partners. Other key partners, including the Vancouver Board of Education and the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, have contributed critically needed sites for new secured childcare centres co-located with their lands and facilities.

Going forward, senior governments seek to share the costs and responsibilities of creating and securing childcare spaces with other partners. Partners' relative roles and investments in new childcare facility infrastructure will likely continue to shift and evolve as a new system emerges. Planning for and securing suitable sites will continue to require broad cooperation among partners. Planned expansion of school age care is most critically aligned with the mandates of public school



Planning and delivering expanded childcare infrastructure (Cont'd)

boards, together with supportive partners including Community Centre Associations. The City's role in land use and spatial planning will be needed to enable essential childcare infrastructure to be planned on suitable sites in ways that align with multiple objectives and create complete neighbourhoods. This is where the City can have the highest impact.

Mobilizing to support senior government investments

Coordinated mobilization by the City and other local partners will be essential to support and make the most of senior government investments in childcare infrastructure and ongoing operations in Vancouver. This involves looking at:

Creating space and opportunity for infrastructure expansion: Identifying available sites for new childcare investment is a key challenge in high-density contexts with high land costs like Vancouver. The City of Vancouver is well positioned to build on partnerships with local government agencies, the non-profit sector, the development industry, and Indigenous-led organizations to involve broad partnerships in securing sites across neighbourhoods to meet needs, including making the most of public land to meet community needs. Creating opportunity for childcare development means intentionally planning for essential childcare infrastructure in every neighbourhood, and exploring policy and regulatory approaches to enable delivery of those needed facilities.

Leveraging available senior government funding: Strategic structural alignment of local investments, programs, and regulatory approaches with senior government opportunities can maximize the impacts and reach of available senior government funding to expand childcare infrastructure and operations in Vancouver.

Aligning efforts with senior government policies and goals: The City and other local partners can maximize efforts towards shared goals by ensuring that local initiatives align with senior government efforts towards creating a universal system. Senior government intentions to focus expansion on not-for-profit providers align with a long-standing City focus on supporting a strong non-profit childcare sector and may shape new future policy directions. Ongoing advocacy remains essential to make sure local needs are reflected in senior government goals



Advancing Equitable, Culturally Safe Access to Early Learning and Child Care

Ongoing efforts by the City, senior governments and other partners will be required to address inequities in access to childcare that meets the diverse needs of all children and families in Vancouver. This role demands supported and coordinated service delivery, and focused resources to develop tools and supports for children and families experiencing the most difficulty accessing care that meets their needs.

As senior government operating funding models unfold over the next four years, the City and other local partners will continue to target resources to monitor local needs and to address gaps in service affecting underserved communities. Evolving civic and local partner roles in granting, policy and programs will continue to support a good start for all children and families in Vancouver during the transitions ahead.

For the first time in Vancouver's decades of leadership on childcare, senior governments are leading the way to a future universal system that may no longer have a vast shortage of spaces. Within a future service equilibrium, childcare planning efforts by the City and other local partners could eventually focus on maintaining and renewing service levels, addressing needs in growth areas, and supporting ongoing equity for children and families. With the City and other partners working steadily together to achieve shared goals, the next decade can bring Vancouver's children, families and communities closer than ever before to a childcare equilibrium and a universal \$10aDay system of childcare. The social and economic benefits of access to quality early learning and childcare for every child whose family needs or wants it have the potential to be realized, increasing equity and prosperity in Vancouver and beyond.



FIRST STEPS: Early Actions

This list of Early Actions forms the first phase for implementation of the Strategy, with one action addressing each of the five directions.

Policy Direction 1: Plan for Expanded Childcare in Complete Neighbourhoods

Early Action #1: Seek opportunities to increase childcare space creation through integrated planning, streamlined processes, and the development of new and expanded tools.

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<1yr, no additional resources required) |
|---|---|
| 1A. Engage in comprehensive planning to locate childcare with housing, schools and jobs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Integrate goals (and targets, where applicable) for childcare, housing and jobs within upcoming strategic plans and area plans. ii) Include group childcare within urban design modeling for built form typologies to inform the upcoming Rupert and Renfrew Station Area Plan. |
| 1B. Secure not-for-profit childcare programs where needed most | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Work across City service groups to support expanded childcare infrastructure through coordinated approaches: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify site opportunities to expand childcare infrastructure as part of planning and development processes, with particular focus in underserved areas and in areas without childcare targets defined through public benefits strategies¹¹. • Identify opportunities to support childcare delivery that align with mutual goals and build on efficiencies and strengths to offer compounding public benefit, • Build and maintain relationships with public bodies, non-profit organizations and funders, and develop coordinated processes and protocols, applying change management approaches • Optimize use of civic land and resources • Formalize a planning criteria framework to identify priority childcare sites for civic investment • Explore opportunities to enable and deliver new childcare spaces through cost-effective retrofits or modular facilities. |

¹¹ Childcare targets included in most Community Plans and Local Area Plans since 2010, including the Mount Pleasant Community Plan (2010), West End Community Plan (2013), Downtown Eastside Plan (2014), Marpole Community Plan (2014), and Grandview-Woodland Community Plan (2016). Public benefits strategies have also been included in modern implementation plans, such as the Cambie Corridor Public Benefits Strategy (2018), Norquay Village Neighbourhood Centre Plan (2010), and various Major Project sites (Pearson-Dogwood, Heather Lands, East Fraserlands, to name a few).

Policy Direction 1: Plan for Expanded Childcare in Complete Neighbourhoods (Cont'd)

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<1yr, no additional resources required) |
|---|--|
| <p>1B. Secure not-for-profit childcare programs where needed most (Cont'd from pg 37)</p> | <p><i>This may include developing an interdepartmental staff working group to guide delivery of early actions and future action planning, and ongoing alignment with other policy implementation. Key partners include the Vancouver Affordable Housing Endowment Fund.</i></p> |
| <p>1C. Employ and develop diverse tools to support the expansion of childcare infrastructure</p> | <p>i) Launch a City-managed capital grants program to invest in and secure community led, non-City-owned childcare serving children younger than school age.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Community Childcare Expansion Program (CCEP) framework is attached to this report as Appendix C. <p>ii) Explore, test, and monitor potential options, requirements, and opportunities to secure childcare delivery in focused contexts with early policy alignments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test the economic viability of potential options or requirements to secure childcare within suitable large developments in mixed employment areas • Explore opportunities to apply identified options or requirements to secure childcare development within the upcoming Rupert and Renfrew Station Area plan. • Incorporate childcare as an option for transportation demand management (TDM) plans required for new developments. |
| <p>1D. Streamline approvals to support efficient childcare delivery</p> | <p>i) Engage with internal and external partners including provincial licensing, and adopt a phased continuous improvement approach to optimize, streamline and align development approval processes for childcare:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify gaps, inefficiencies, and opportunities to enhance, streamline and align City development approval processes and provincial licensing. • Assess clarity and navigability of the City's childcare development process, particularly for small non-profit and Indigenous-led applicants. • Monitor impacts of changing zoning and development models, particularly on licensed family childcare delivery. • Compile and share key information needed by partners to support childcare development. • Identify resource requirements to expedite the early actions above. |



Policy Direction 2: Support Indigenous Children and Families

Early Action #2: Plan together with urban Indigenous partners and local First Nations to expand Indigenous-led childcare and cultural safety across childcare services.

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<i><1yr, no additional resources required</i>) |
|--|--|
| <p>2A. Integrate diverse Indigenous perspectives in policy and planning</p> | <p>i) Integrate goals (and targets, where applicable) for childcare, housing and jobs within upcoming strategic plans and area plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene Indigenous-led ELCC partners to identify existing gaps and key opportunities to support and enhance Indigenous led ELCC • Partner to support data collection to understand Indigenous childcare needs and gaps |
| <p>2B. Support expansion and capacity-building of Indigenous-led childcare through City investment and policies</p> | <p>i) Consider options for City capital resources to support creation of Indigenous-led childcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set specific targets for new, Indigenous-led City-supported childcare, including school age care, guided by funding earmarked for this purpose in 2023-26 Capital Plan • Prioritize Indigenous-led childcare (including small-scale programs) within the upcoming Community Childcare Expansion Program (CCEP) for non-City owned facilities. |
| <p>2C. Support cultural safety for Indigenous children and families in childcare programs</p> | <p>i) Support research to understand and define cultural safety and humility in childcare for Indigenous children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage and partner with Indigenous-led organizations to support research on how cultural safety can be operationalized in childcare settings |



Policy Direction 3: Expand Equity and Accessibility of Quality Childcare

Early Action #3: Optimize City efforts and resources to support equity, accessibility and the physical quality of childcare spaces.

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<i><1yr, no additional resources required</i>) |
|--|---|
| 3A. Seek opportunities to include barrier-free design considerations and requirements for City-owned childcare facilities | i) Design and build new childcare facilities to be barrier-free, to support healthy development |
| 3B. Explore the needs for flexible childcare services, including services beyond standard weekday hours. | i) Research, engage, and explore opportunities to support flexible childcare services, in alignment with Provincial directions and support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore gaps and opportunities for flexible childcare services associated with specific key workforces • Explore opportunities to meet specific workforce needs within licensed group care programs. • Engage sectoral partners about opportunities to support increased access to extended hour and flexible childcare in home-based licensed family childcare programs. |
| 3C. Direct City operating grants and nominal leases towards increasing equitable access to childcare | i) Launch a revised childcare operational grants program in 2023 with equity-based criteria, focused on increasing childcare access for children and families in equity-denied groups, in the transition period between our current system and a universally affordable and available one. ii) Continue to roll out basic Public Service Requirements as part of all future nominal leases and subleases with the City, to confirm that City-supported operations continue to deliver quality, accessible, and affordable programming that meets community needs and City objectives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Service Requirements, jointly developed with each non-profit tenant, may address policy goals and best practices such as accessibility and inclusion, sound financial management, parent involvement, cultural safety and humility, and optimizing use of facilities including beyond standard weekday hours. |



Policy Direction 3: Expand Equity and Accessibility of Quality Childcare (Cont'd)

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>3D. Promote more equitable access to nature</p> | <p>i) Identify opportunities for shared use of land and resources to increase children's equitable access to nature in all areas of the city:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where feasible, seek to grant public access to childcare outdoor play spaces in City-owned facilities, outside of childcare hours • Work with Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation and Vancouver Board of Education to support policy development guiding shared outdoor space access for childcare operations on their facilities and grounds. |
|---|---|

Policy Direction 4: Build Partnerships Towards a Universal System

Early Action #4: Convene partners to advocate and plan for a senior-government-led universal childcare system through joint planning, capacity-building, and investments.

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<1yr, no additional resources required) |
|--|---|
| <p>4A. Advocate full investment by senior governments in a universal childcare system</p> | <p>i) Partner with other municipalities and local government organizations to advocate the advancement of policy, planning, and delivery of child care by senior levels of government, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognize and invest in the higher costs of developing childcare infrastructure in urban centres; • To invest in childcare facility renewal, replacement and sustainability; • To work across provincial ministries and jurisdictions to clearly define and enforce minimum licensing and facility design standards for childcare; • To include healthy built environment standards in provincial child care design standards and regulations; • To support a resilient and professional workforce of Early Childhood Educators and other childcare workers; • To create a fully inclusive childcare system that is accessible to children and families who have traditionally faced additional barriers to accessing care, including children with additional support needs; and • To provide operational funding that enables flexible and extended hour services within a universal system. |



Policy Direction 4: Build Partnerships Towards a Universal System (Cont'd)

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<1yr, no additional resources required) |
|--|--|
| <p>4B. Build strong partnerships to align childcare planning with facility delivery</p> | <p>i) Renew City involvement in partnership and advocacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage and partner with local public, intergovernmental, and non-profit partners to identify and implement mutual goals for childcare and to support equitable access for children and families in equity denied groups. Renew involvement in coordinating bodies including the Vancouver Childcare Council Fully participate in opportunities convened by senior governments. Convene a staff working group with local public partners including the City, Board of Parks and Recreation, and Vancouver Board of Education, to inform decision-making in planning for childcare and to track progress towards meeting shared goals. <p>ii) Work with key public and non-profit partners to strengthen coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify mutual goals that can be achieved through childcare delivery, and build on efficiencies and strengths to offer compounding public benefits. Build capacity to plan, coordinate, and deliver childcare integrated with partner-affiliated facilities, land, and development sites. Develop coordinated processes and protocols for joint childcare planning with partners, which respond to each partners' specific needs. Integrate and extend supports to Community Centre Associations to manage, strengthen, and expand childcare operations through coordination and facilitation within the community centre network. <p><i>Key partners include the Vancouver Board of Education, Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, Community Centre Associations, and non-profit housing delivery partners</i></p> |
| <p>4C. Direct City operating grants and nominal leases towards increasing equitable access to childcare</p> | <p>i) Enhance the resilience of Vancouver's non-profit childcare sector by funding capacity-building opportunities that are strategically aligned with provincial funding changes, helping to prepare non-profits for their role in a universal system of care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect and support childcare societies to build capacity in neighbourhood networks Develop and share tools enhancing collaboration between societies and supporting direct service delivery. Engage childcare societies to identify needs and collaboration opportunities. Engage childcare support organizations, housing operators, and other partners to identify and address gaps in the ability to ensure stable, quality operations of purpose-built, secured family childcare. |



Policy Direction 5: Support Renewal and Resilience of Essential Childcare Infrastructure

Early Action #5: Explore options to support retention, replacement and expansion of existing childcare

| Policy Goals | Components of Early Actions (<1yr, no additional resources required) |
|---|--|
| 5A. Support long-term sustainability of civic-led childcare infrastructure | <div><div>i) Work with public partners and agencies to balance community needs while securing, retaining, replacing or expanding childcare co-located with partner facilities and lands</div><div><div>• Work with the Vancouver Affordable Housing Endowment Fund (VAHEF) to integrate lease renewal and redevelopment of nonmarket and non-profit housing with opportunities for co-located childcare retention, replacement and expansion</div><div>Key partners include the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation, public school boards, BC Housing and senior government partners</div></div></div> |
| 5B. Identify and mitigate the impacts resulting from displacement of needed childcare | <div><div>i) Collect data on childcare closures (including number of spaces, auspice and ownership of childcare facilities, buildings and lands, geographical locations) to aid in future analysis and solution building.</div></div> |

