



## Committee of the Whole Report For the Meeting of December 2, 2021

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**To:** Committee of the Whole **Date:** November 18, 2021  
**From:** Karen Hoesel, Director, Sustainable Planning & Community Development  
**Subject:** Childcare In Victoria - Implementation Plan

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### RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Direct staff to commence the proposed short-term actions in 2022, noted in Attachment A to this report as follows:
  - a. Consider amendments to the City's *Zoning Bylaws* to streamline municipal approval processes for childcare and report back to Council with recommendations and bylaw amendments;
  - b. Create communications to help navigate City processes and help inform and guide childcare space creation processes and licensing requirements;
  - c. Update the Childcare in Victoria report to include more recent data and childcare space targets;
  - d. Consider childcare operations as part of co-location opportunities in future developments.
2. Direct staff to report back with recommendations on advancing Childcare in Victoria advocacy actions in Q2-Q3 of 2022.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with recommendations for implementing actions from the Childcare in Victoria report that are in municipal jurisdiction. The overall goal is to address systemic childcare challenges throughout the City of Victoria through a multi-dimensional approach. The Childcare in Victoria recommendations are grouped into five themes including: process, policy, partnerships, advocacy, and education and training. Each theme has a number of recommended actions.

Implementation of these actions has been considered by staff, and an implementation plan prepared, proposing short-, medium- and longer-term timelines for the actions in municipal jurisdiction. Staff propose initiating short-term actions immediately that will include:

- 1) amend the City's Zoning Bylaws to streamline municipal approval processes

- 2) create communications to help navigate City processes and help inform and guide childcare space creation processes and licensing requirements
- 3) update the Childcare in Victoria report to include more recent data and childcare space targets to inform future policy and development application processes
- 4) consider childcare operations as part of co-location opportunities in future developments.

These short-term actions will be addressed in 2022 in alignment with staff capacity and are partially contingent upon 2022 supplementary budget requests.

The Implementation Plan serves as a road map to move forward with the actions recommended in the Childcare in Victoria report. This important work will occur collaboratively with staff and community partners. Childcare is a universal human right and providing affordable and equitable options across Victoria is essential to aligning with the strategic focus of the organization.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with recommendations for implementing actions from the Childcare in Victoria report that are within municipal jurisdiction.

## **BACKGROUND**

In 2019, the Mayor's Child Care Solutions Working Group was awarded a Community Childcare Planning Program grant from the province. The program was set up to provide funding for local governments to engage in childcare planning activities to develop a community childcare space creation action plan. The specific goals of Victoria's plan were to create an updated inventory of spaces within the City of Victoria, map the current state of childcare in the city, review City policies related to childcare, and make recommendations for creating more affordable, high-quality childcare spaces in the city.

This work resulted in a Childcare in Victoria report (Attachment B), informed by a community profile analysis, background policy research, a childcare providers survey, focus groups, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, and a series of workshops with the Mayor's Childcare Solutions Working Group and City staff. Findings of the engagement and analysis show that there is a gap (estimated at approximately 4,233 spaces based on 2019 data) between the number and types of childcare spaces available in Victoria and what is needed by families.

The report was considered by Council at the meeting of October 8, 2020, and following motion was passed:

*That Council receive the report for information and:*

1. *Refer to staff to report back at the Term 3 Update on the Financial and Human Resource implications and the ability to implement the Process, Policy, Partnerships and Education and Training recommendations that are within municipal jurisdiction in the Report.*
2. *Bring forward the specific recommended advocacy motions for consideration at a future Council meeting.*

This report addresses part one of the above motion.

## **ISSUES & ANALYSIS**

The Childcare in Victoria report includes a series of actions addressing different themes including process improvements, policy objectives, partnerships, advocacy, and education and training.

Implementation of these actions have been considered by staff, and an implementation plan prepared, proposing short-, medium- and longer-term timelines for the actions in municipal jurisdiction. Please refer to Attachment B – Childcare in Victoria Implementation Plan.

## 1. Process Actions

The Childcare in Victoria report recommends making regulatory processes easy to understand and navigate in a meaningful way to lower barriers for the creation of more licensed spaces. This theme includes two actions. The first action is to streamline local government regulatory processes (business licensing and zoning) and improve application and referral steps; and the second action is to implement childcare planning best practices and maintain access rate and childcare need data over time.

### a. Streamline Regulatory Processes:

Obtaining the required land use approvals can have timeline and cost implications for operators seeking to open a childcare facility. The processes can also appear complex to applicants who are unfamiliar with making such applications and additional costs may be incurred when hiring consultants (i.e. architects) to assist with preparing plans, etc.

Currently, childcare facilities accommodating eight children or less are not regulated by the City of Victoria *Zoning Bylaws*. However, if a new building is proposed, or an existing building will be physically altered (internally or externally) to accommodate such a facility, then other permits, such as Development Permits, Development Variance Permits and Building Permits, may be required.

For childcare facilities accommodating more than eight children, the City's Zoning Bylaw regulations are applicable. Childcare is a permitted use in many zones, however, there are some zones where such a use is not permitted or is permitted with specific restrictions. If an operator wishes to open a daycare accommodating more than eight children in a zone that does not permit the use being proposed, then a Rezoning Application is required. If the zone does permit the proposed use but the proposal does not or cannot meet the other regulations outlined in the Zoning Bylaw (for example, parking requirements), then a variance may be required.

Rezoning applications are considered by Council following a public hearing, however, before submitting an application to the City, the applicant must meet with the neighbourhood Community Association Land Use Committee (CALUC) to present the proposal and gather community feedback. Once it is formally submitted to the City, an application may take six to eight months to process and application fees will be approximately \$4,000 or greater, depending on the specifics of the project. If a development permit or development variance permit is also required, then this will incur further permitting costs (the fee will depend on the specifics of the project and whether variances from the *Zoning Bylaw* are proposed).

It is recommended that the City's *Zoning Bylaws* be reviewed, commencing in early 2022, to determine what amendments are needed to make it easier to provide childcare spaces in the city.

### b. Best Practices, Access Rates and Data:

The second action is to implement childcare planning best practices and maintain access rate and childcare needs data over time. The space targets in the Childcare in Victoria report were created based on 2019 data prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have affected childcare needs throughout the city. Staff propose to update the relevant data, which will help inform future policy initiatives and development application processes where childcare is a proposed land use.

Childcare will be further integrated by encouraging co-location opportunities with other uses such as affordable housing projects.

It is recommended that the Childcare in Victoria report be updated, commencing in early 2022, to include more recent data and childcare space targets.

## 2. Policy Actions

The Childcare in Victoria report recommends embedding childcare planning into community planning activities, improving regulatory tools to help facilitate the construction of new childcare centres, and creating incentives for the creation of childcare spaces in new developments.

### a. Embedding Childcare Planning into Community Planning

Embedding childcare planning into community planning activities is recommended as a medium-term action once the childcare data and space targets have been updated. Future work can involve reviewing existing policies for alignment with the Childcare in Victoria findings, adding childcare considerations in city-wide or local area plans to identify where increased access is needed, and identifying childcare space creation considerations.

### b. Improving Regulatory Tools

Improving regulatory tools to help facilitate the construction of new childcare centres is captured in the Process actions above that recommends zoning and business license improvements. Process improvements and zoning regulations are inextricably linked, as restrictions on land use trigger some of the above-described permitting processes.

### c. Creating Incentives

Creating incentives for the creation of childcare spaces in new developments is currently underway as part of the *Official Community Plan (OCP)* Update project, which is considering amendments to align the OCP with recently approved City policy documents and objectives. This project will be completed in 2022 and includes considerations for bonus density for affordable housing and other public benefits, including childcare spaces. This project will also update childcare policy to align with the Childcare in Victoria report.

## 3. Partnership Actions

The Childcare in Victoria report recommends strengthening and creating partnerships with other agencies and municipalities and demonstrating leadership in childcare provisioning. The report acknowledged the abundance of existing assets within the region. Partnerships already exist between local government, schools, childcare providers, parents and caregivers who are invested in improving access to childcare in the City of Victoria.

Both the actions under partnerships are identified as longer-term actions, however, they will start to be addressed progressively as short and medium-term regulatory and process improvements are undertaken. Demonstrating leadership in childcare provisioning will be achieved through moving forward with other actions in the Implementation Plan. Additional steps for these actions will be then assessed once the medium-term actions are met.

#### 4. Advocacy Actions

The report included fulsome engagement that highlighted many issues that need to be considered to improve the state of childcare in the region. Beyond space creation, advocacy that emphasizes the need for improved working conditions and the need to address the unequitable impacts of childcare challenges are key to improving childcare access. Advocacy recommendations included:

1. Advocate for changes to the School Act to better support childcare space creation in the province.
2. Advocate to Senior government for additional capital funding for childcare projects.
3. Support and encourage employers to share responsibility for childcare within their communities.
4. Address gaps in equity and promote poverty reduction.
5. Advocate for childcare as a social determinant of health.

As per Council's previous motion, staff will report back in Q2-Q3 2022 on the five advocacy actions listed in the report that are outside municipal jurisdiction, with recommendations on their advancement.

#### 5. Education and Training Actions

The report recommended further supporting process streamlining by lowering the knowledge gap that surrounds it – particularly for start-up and expansion of childcare spaces. Two actions were recommended: to develop childcare start-up workshops and guidebooks, and to support enhanced training for local Early Childhood Educators (ECE's). Education and training are vital to capacity building, as is ensuring that those who play a vital role in the childcare system know how to navigate and improve it.

##### a. Develop Childcare Start-Up Workshops and Guidebooks

This action was listed in the original report, however staff will determine the most appropriate method to provide this information in alignment with regulatory and process improvements. This is proposed to be addressed in the short-term by gauging need with community partners and, if deemed necessary, developing communications to provide clear guidance on navigating updated regulatory processes. This may be supported through a main childcare page on Victoria's website that will include publicly accessible information on the process of developing childcare spaces. The potential need for complementary workshops focused on navigating City processes will be determined in the future.

##### b. Support Enhanced Training for Local Early Childhood Educators (ECEs)

Providing enhanced training to local ECEs is a recommendation that is beyond municipal purview. It is proposed that this action be led by community partners, so the timing will be determined by external organizations and will depend on the programs that are already offered.

### **OPTIONS & IMPACTS**

#### *Accessibility Impact Statement*

The City's Accessibility Framework is considered in City policy development processes and informs final products and outcomes.

## *2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan*

The creation of a city-wide Childcare Action and Strategy is listed as Action 1 of Strategic Objective 5: Health, Well-Being and a Welcoming City (p.30).

### *Impacts to Financial Plan*

Much of the preliminary implementation work identified in the Childcare in Victoria report can be accommodated using existing staff resources as part of ongoing operational work and as new projects in 2022. One immediate action that is recommended that will have resource impacts is to update the childcare data and space targets and corresponding maps. This will require an estimated budget of \$5,000 which has been incorporated into the 2022 budget process for Council's consideration. Any further funding requests would come forward in future years.

### *Official Community Plan Consistency Statement*

Implementation of the Childcare in Victoria report actions is consistent with the OCP. Under Multigenerational Neighborhoods, policy 15.8 encourages the development of quality, accessible, affordable daycare by considering non-profit daycare space as an amenity in new developments and encouraging new childcare spaces throughout the city.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The Childcare in Victoria – Implementation Plan serves as a road map to move forward with the short-, medium- and long-term actions recommended in the Childcare in Victoria report. This important work will occur collaboratively with staff and community partners. Childcare is a universal human right and providing affordable, equitable, and inclusive options across Victoria is essential to aligning with the strategic focus of the organization.

Respectfully submitted,

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Senior Planner – Social Policy

Karen Hoese, Director  
Sustainable Planning and Community Development

## **Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager**

### **List of Attachments**

- Attachment A: Childcare in Victoria – Implementation Plan
- Attachment B: Childcare in Victoria report