

REPORT

Climate Action, Planning and Development

To: Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council
Date: December 12, 2022

From: Emilie K. Adin
Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development
File: 09.1740.02

Item #: 2022-741

Subject: **Child Care and Community Uses on School Sites**

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council direct staff to send a letter from Mayor and Council to the Minister of Education and Child Care, outlining the need for additional senior government support to address short- and long-term school capacity and child care needs in New Westminister.

PURPOSE

To update Council regarding school capacity and child care needs in the community, and the potential loss of Neighbourhood Learning Centre spaces, including two purpose-built child cares, on school sites in and on the periphery of the Downtown.

SUMMARY

The City continues to meet its commitments under the Metro Vancouver Regional Growth Strategy by developing plans and policies to accommodate population growth. To this end, the City regularly communicates demographic information to the School District to assist in its school facility planning and programming. The City also collaborates with the School District to capitalize on opportunities to address community needs (e.g., Neighbourhood Learning Centres) and to address challenges (e.g., lack of school age care spaces in Queensborough).

The School District is finding it increasingly difficult to accommodate student growth within its existing facilities and as a short-term strategy for addressing its capacity issues, it has determined that Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) spaces, including purpose-built child cares, are secondary to its school age educational focus. As such, it

is proposing to utilize NLC spaces at École Qayqayt Elementary School and Fraser River Middle School (FRMS), which are located in and on the periphery of the Downtown, to realize additional classroom space needed for September 2024.

As proposed by the School District, the two non-profit child care programs, with a total of 74 spaces, including 24 infant/toddler spaces, would be relocated to Lord Tweedsmuir Elementary School in the West End and F.W. Howay Elementary School in Massey-Victory Heights, by spring 2024. This would significantly impact child care families, particularly those with limited transportation options. Additionally, the other NLC spaces, including a community kitchen, flex offices and multi-purpose area, at École Qayqayt Elementary School, would be converted to classroom space, which would displace community programming, including New West Family Place. This programming addresses the needs of Indigenous, lone-parent, low-income and newcomer families, many of whom live in and on the periphery of the Downtown.

This report provides background context regarding the school capacity challenges, and the child care shortage that exists. The report builds on the recent correspondence between the School District and the City (letters are included as Attachments 2 and 3), as well as subsequent meetings between staff and elected officials of both organizations, and recommends advocating to the Province for additional resources to meet school capacity and child care needs in New Westminster.

OPTIONS

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council direct staff to send a letter from Mayor and Council to the Minister of Education and Child Care, outlining the need for additional senior government support to address short- and long-term school capacity and child care needs in New Westminster; or
2. That Council provide staff with other direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Staff Memo

Attachment 2 – November 7, 2022 Letter from School Board to the City

Attachment 3 – November 8, 2022 School District Memo

Attachment 4 – November 29, 2022 Letter from the City to the School Board

APPROVALS

This report was prepared by:
John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning
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This report has been reviewed by:
Jackie Teed, Senior Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development

This report was approved by:
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Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer