



Attachment 4
*Nov 29, 2022 Letter from City
to School Board*



Patrick Johnstone
Mayor

November 29, 2022

Chair Dhaliwal and School Trustees
School District #40
811 Ontario Street
New Westminster, BC V3M 0J7

Sent by email: boardofeducation@sd40.bc.ca

Dear Chair Dhaliwal and School Trustees,

RE: School Capacity Crisis and Impacts on NLC Spaces, Including Child Care

Mayor and Council received your November 7, 2022 letter regarding your current school capacity challenges, and the proposed relocation of the purpose-built child care facilities at Fraser River Middle School (FRMS) and Ecole Qayqayt Elementary School. Meeting the school needs of New Westminster families is a joint interest of ours, and we recognize the School District is in a very challenging position. While the City has been successful at accommodating transit-oriented and family-friendly housing need in our downtown and we appreciate having been engaged in the School District's creation of a Long Range Facilities Plan that charts a path to accommodating growth of school-aged children over the coming years, meeting existing and projected classroom needs in the shorter term is an additional challenge.

We understand that the School District is exploring options such as placing additional portables, adjusting catchment boundaries where appropriate, and relocating programs of choice to facilitate capacity where it is needed. We share community concerns about the conversion of Neighbourhood Learning Centre (NLC) space to classroom space. The relocation of these vital services to other parts of the city will be a functional loss for families in the Downtown, an area where many families have limited transportation options. The downtown is already undersupplied with non-profit child care spaces,

especially for infant/toddler care. These purpose-built facilities, with excellent outdoor play space, are extremely valuable to the community. Comparable space is simply not available elsewhere in the downtown.

There are also funding and timing constraints to finding alternative downtown space. The School District's November 8, 2022 memo indicated that funding available from the Province is applicable only on District-owned properties. The funding also appears to be inadequate to address the anticipated capital cost to develop alternate locations for non-profit child care in or on the periphery of the downtown, if an available location were identified. There is also no operational funding on offer, which may limit opportunities to keep fees affordable. Timing is also a concern, as it would typically take months of planning to identify a potential location for a child care, including undertaking due diligence regarding site analysis and facility costing, as well as conducting consultation with Fraser Health Community Care Facilities Licensing.

Staff from our two organizations have had preliminary discussions identifying creative options for additional portable placement that require further exploration, and we see value in continuing those discussions. We also think there may be other options yet to be identified, and look forward to working collaboratively in exploring where these may be found.

We would also like to propose that the City and School Board renew and recommit to a Child Care Protocol, similar to the one that was adopted in 2009. With the Ministry of Education becoming the Ministry of Education and Child Care, the child care landscape is shifting, and we see opportunity for our two organizations to work together more strategically. Renewing the Child Care Protocol could help us ensure child care needs and opportunities are kept front of mind, and creative solutions are found.

Lastly, we invite the School Board to advocate jointly with us to the Province for the additional resources for our community needs. With schools and child care being provincial responsibilities, we are keenly aware that additional support is needed from senior government to create school and child care facilities that fit within our urban and growing context. We believe we could have some success in advocating for support to address short term capacity needs, and we also see a need for joint advocacy in meeting long term needs. We hope, for example, that capital funding constraints will not limit the scale and capacity of the schools that are called for in the School District's Long Range Facility Plan, putting us back in a similar situation where additional classroom capacity is needed shortly after construction of those schools. As both the City and School District are severely limited in their land holdings, it is incumbent upon us to work together to ensure sites are used as efficiently as possible.

We look forward to continuing these discussions at our Joint School Planning Task Force meeting, currently scheduled for December 9th.

Sincerely,



Patrick Johnstone
Mayor

CC: New Westminster City Council
Lisa Spitale, Chief Administrative Officer
Jacque Killawee, City Clerk
John Stark, Supervisor of Community Planning
Meredith Seeton, Policy Planner and School District Liaison
Karim Hachlaf, Superintendent of Schools/CEO School District No. 40
Bettina Ketcham, Secretary-Treasurer/CFO School District No. 40
Dave Crowe, Director of Capital Projects School District No. 40
Matt Brito, Director of Facilities School District No. 40
Lynda Fletcher-Gordon, Executive Director, Purpose Society