

# **REPORT**

## ***Climate Action, Planning and Development***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** August 28, 2023

**From:** Serena Trachta, Acting Director  
Climate Action, Planning and Development  
**File:** 13.2630.06

**Item #:** 2023-520

**Subject:** **City of New Westminster and New Westminster School District No. 40 Draft Child Care Guiding Principles**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council endorse the City of New Westminster and School District No. 40 draft Child Care Guiding Principles.

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### **PURPOSE**

To provide Council with the City of New Westminster and School District No. 40 draft Child Care Guiding Principles for feedback. Council's feedback, along with that from the School District Board of Education, would then be used to further refine and create a final draft for future consideration of endorsement.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

At the Council Meeting on January 30, 2023, New Westminster City Council passed the following motion:

*That Council direct staff to forward a letter to New Westminster School District No. 40 formally inviting them to jointly develop a renewed Child Care Protocol between the City of New Westminster and the School District.*

This motion recognizes that quality, accessible and affordable child care provides significant benefits for children, families and the larger community, and that the City and the School District play important facilitative roles in helping to maintain, secure and develop licensed, non-profit child care spaces within their collective control. Given the recently expanded mandate of the Ministry of Education and Child Care to integrate

child care and early childhood educators into the overall K-12 school system, developing a protocol would align with this mandate and leverage the Ministry's increased involvement to help realize much needed child care spaces, including better positioning the City and School District to realize funding under various provincial programs.

Following Council's endorsement, on February 15, 2023, the Office of the Mayor forwarded a letter containing the City's formal invitation to jointly develop a renewed Child Care Protocol with the School District. On March 29, 2023, through a formal letter from the School District Board of Education, the City was formally advised that at its March 7, 2023 meeting, the Board unanimously carried the following motion:

*That the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) accept the Invitation to create a renewed Child Care Protocol between the District and City of New Westminster and that an update be provided to the Board of Education no later than the Scheduled June 2023 open board meeting.*

Following receipt of this letter and the motion contained within it, collaboration immediately commenced between the City and the School District staff to develop the draft Child Care Guiding Principles, which are contained in the Discussion section of this report. The District preferred to focus on Principles rather than a Protocol.

The draft Guiding Principles have already been presented to the School District Board of Education at its June 20, 2023 meeting. After the designed review period, no comments were provided by the Board. While School District staff see this as an indication of the Trustees' confidence and support, they remain open to addressing any questions that may arise in the future. City staff is now sharing the draft Child Care Guiding Principles with Council for their information and feedback.

## **BACKGROUND**

The School District has a long history of facilitating child care and has worked collaboratively with the City to create new child care spaces and to foster early and middle childhood development. The School District and City signed a Child Care Protocol in 2009, and have partnered on a number of projects resulting in 189 licensed, non-profit child care spaces. The School District and the City were also active on the Public Partners Child Development Committee and continue to be involved on the KIDS New West Child Development Committee.

In February 2022, the Province announced that child care is being brought under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. As part of an associated press release by the Minister of Education and the Minister of State for Child Care, it noted that this transition "acknowledges that child care is part of a child's learning journey, delivering important early learning opportunities and supporting future educational success." In April 2022, the Ministry of Education and Child Care was formed.

Given the recently expanded mandate of the Ministry of Education and Child Care to integrate child care and early childhood educators into the overall K-12 school system, developing a Protocol would align with this mandate and leverage the Ministry's increased involvement to help realize much needed child care spaces, including better positioning the City and School District to realize funding under the Child Care BC New Spaces Fund or similar programs.

At the Council Meeting on January 30, 2023, New Westminster City Council passed the following motion:

*That Council direct staff to forward a letter to New Westminster School District No. 40 formally inviting them to jointly develop a renewed Child Care Protocol between the City of New Westminster and the School District.*

Attachment 1 contains the full January 30, 2023 Council Report, including a copy of the original 2009 Child Care Protocol, a background on what has changed since the original Protocol, and a summary of City and School District collaboration related to child care.

Following Council's endorsement, on February 15, 2023, the Office of the Mayor forwarded a letter to the School District containing the City's formal invitation to jointly develop a renewed Child Care Protocol (Attachment 2). On March 29, 2023, through a formal letter from the School District Board of Education (Attachment 3), the City was formally advised that at its March 7, 2023 meeting, the Board of Education unanimously carried the following motion:

*That the Board of Education of School District No. 40 (New Westminster) accept the Invitation to create a renewed Child Care Protocol between the District and City of New Westminster and that an update be provided to the Board of Education no later than the scheduled June 2023 open board meeting.*

Following receipt of this letter and the motion contained within it, collaboration immediately commenced between the City and the School District. At the onset, School District staff noted that "given the continued evolution of this work, the creation of a protocol is overly rigid and does not allow for flexibility on both sides." To that end, School District staff proposed to collaboratively create Child Care Guiding Principles rather than a protocol to guide collective work.

City and School District staff collaboratively worked to develop the below draft Child Care Guiding Principles through the spring of 2023. It should be noted that the draft Guiding Principles have already been presented to the School District Board of Education at its June 20, 2023 meeting. After the designed review period, no comments were provided by the Board. While School District staff see this as an indication of the Trustees' confidence and support, they remain open to addressing any questions that may arise in the future. City staff is now sharing the draft Child Care Guiding Principles with Council for their information and feedback.

**DISCUSSION**

While funding and provision of child care is a senior government responsibility, which resides with the Province and is now within the Ministry of Education and Child Care, both the City and the School District play important facilitative roles in helping maintain, secure and develop licensed child care spaces within their collective control.

Recognizing the benefits of cooperation, and given that the original Child Care Protocol was adopted in 2009, the City and the School District have developed the following draft Child Care Guiding Principles, which aim to inform how both organizations will work together to create new and maintain existing child care spaces within their collective control. The guiding principles also aim to leverage the Ministry’s recently increased involvement in helping to realize much needed child care spaces in the community.

**Draft Child Care Guiding Principles**

**1. Creating Child Care Spaces in Our Community**

***To prioritize our commitment in the creation of child care by following the lead of senior levels of government on the road to a universal child care system.***

***Rationale***

This guiding principle commits our intention to work towards a universal child care system that creates adequate, accessible and high-quality child care spaces; supports the care and education of our children; and promotes the wellbeing of our community. It will be an ongoing and long process that will take years to accomplish the creation of sufficient child care spaces.

***Pathways***

- To jointly advocate to the senior levels of government for a universal child care system, which provides quality programs that are accessible and affordable, and which ensures that child care workers are adequately recognized and compensated.
- To capitalize on senior government funding opportunities to maintain, stabilize and/or develop licensed, non-profit child care on our lands and in our buildings.
- To maintain and stabilize existing licensed, non-profit child care spaces within our collective control, including ensuring the provision of adequate, quality built indoor and outdoor spaces and affordable and sustainable lease arrangements.
- To ensure that the inclusion of licensed, non-profit child care is a consideration as part of all new, expanded or renovated buildings within our collective control.

## 2. Areas of Responsibility and Division of Focus

***To maximize our expertise and resources, the School District will primarily focus on the provision of school age care on school grounds (ages 5 to 12) and the City will primarily focus on the provision of pre-school age child care (ages 0 to 5).***

### ***Rationale***

Child care is a shared area of responsibility to support families in New Westminster. There are examples of school districts and municipalities that have employed the above cited division of focus – e.g., Burnaby and Vancouver. Further, the School District faces a capacity crisis in spaces available to provide Kindergarten through Grade 12 instruction. This is an example of a change in circumstances from the previous protocol of 2009.

## 3. Identifying and Addressing Gaps in Child Care

***To proactively identify and address gaps in child care and/or barriers that prevent access to child care by using data-driven and community-based approaches to inform our decision-making processes.***

### ***Rationale***

In order to move the child care agenda forward, we must do our respective parts in our various capacities to reduce barriers and to address gaps in child care. Gaps include but are not limited to: Accessible; Affordable; Culturally Appropriate; Equitable Distribution; Inclusive and Welcoming; Indigenous Focus.

### ***Pathways***

- To document child care assets, needs and gaps, and to regularly update this information in order to assist with planning, to better target interventions and to support advocacy efforts.
- To foster accessible, culturally appropriate, equitable, inclusive and welcoming child care spaces with a respectful indigenous focus on our lands and in our buildings, and to ensure that licensed, non-profit operators meet a high standard.

## 4. Grounded in Consultation

***To ensure that the creation of child care is grounded in consultation by prioritizing the voices, needs and perspectives of diverse interests and ensuring that our work is responsive to their evolving needs. We value diversity, inclusion and equity, and we are committed to creating spaces and opportunities for all voices to be heard.***

## **Rationale**

Through a commitment to consultation, we listen, and we build trust and create shared ownership of our work among all diverse interests creating quality spaces and/or programming. Given the above-noted identified gaps, it is important to consult on ways to reduce or eliminate barriers in these areas where we see the School District and City playing key active and also facilitative roles in improving the quality of child care.

## **Pathways**

- To ensure that there are opportunities for the community, including child care operators and families, to inform planning, policy development and decision-making.
- To increase public awareness of the significant educational, social and economic benefits associated with licensed, non-profit child care.

## **5. Continuous Collaboration**

***To foster a culture of continuous collaboration and information sharing by engaging in ongoing dialogue to address needs and gaps and capitalize on opportunities related to child care.***

## **Rationale**

Collaboration is essential to creating effective and sustainable solutions; building strong relationships with diverse interests; and facilitating trust and transparency. We are committed to working together in a way that is open, respectful and inclusive. The guiding principles must be able to stand the test of time and organizational changes, otherwise, they run the risk of becoming quickly obsolete.

## **Pathways**

- To jointly plan and share information for the purpose of meeting the child care needs of our families and maximizing opportunities for licensed, non-profit child care on our lands and in our buildings.

## **Next Steps**

The City and the School District are sharing the draft Guiding Principles with their respective decision-making bodies for information and feedback. Based on any feedback received, revisions will be made and the revised Guiding Principles will be brought back for possible endorsement in fall 2023. In support of the Guiding Principles, an Operational Plan will also be shared at this time, including the possible establishment of a Working Group, and timelines for the development of an updated Needs Assessment and a new Strategy, with the latter possibly being a collaborative effort between the City and School District.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications related to developing the Child Care Guiding Principles, other than staff resources. The work would continue to be led by the Community Planning section of the Climate Action, Planning and Development Department. Regarding any future financial implications should the Child Care Guiding Principles be adopted, City staff would seek Council approval for any child care grants or initiatives requiring City funding.

## **INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

If approved, the Community Planning section of the Climate Action, Planning and Development Department will continue to work closely with other City Departments and Divisions, including Civic Buildings and Properties and Parks and Recreation. Community planning staff will also continue to work closely with the new School District Manager of Early Learning and Child Care.

## **OPTIONS**

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council endorse the City of New Westminster and School District No. 40 draft Child Care Guiding Principles.
2. That Council provide other direction.

Staff recommends option 1.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1: Council Report dated January 30, 2023

Attachment 2: Letter from City of New Westminster dated February 15, 2023

Attachment 3: Letter from School District No. 40 dated March 29, 2023

## **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:  
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This report was reviewed by:  
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This report was approved by:  
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