

Report to Council



Date: July 13, 2020
To: Council
From: City Manager
Subject: Child Care Needs Assessment Final Report
Department: Active Living & Culture

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from Active Living & Culture dated July 13, 2020 regarding the Community Child Care Planning & Needs Assessment Grant Final Report;

AND THAT Council direct staff to work with the Central Okanagan Child Care Committee to submit a final Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) grant report and a Child Care Community Planning Report to the UBCM and the Ministry of Child and Family Development fulfilling the grant obligations of the Community Child Care Planning Program.

Purpose:

To provide Council with the final report from the Community Child Care Planning & Needs Assessment conducted in partnership with the City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country, and District of Peachland.

Background:

In 2018, the BC Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) announced two new funding programs to support local governments to better understand local child care needs and to develop new child care spaces in their communities. One of the funding programs, the Community Child Care Planning Program, is administered by the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM). Eligible projects were able to receive up to \$25,000 per local municipality or regional district included in the application.

The Care for Our Kids study is the result of a successful regional application to the Community Child Care Planning Program due to the known crossover in child care between municipalities. The City of Kelowna is the project lead for the \$97,300 grant, collaborating with the City of West Kelowna, District of Lake Country and District of Peachland, along with the Child Care Council of Central Okanagan.

Urban Matters was consulted as the lead in the data collection and reporting of this information.

The project had four areas of focus:

- Collect information regarding child care needs of the community;

- Create an inventory of existing child care spaces;
- Establish space creation targets over the next 10 years;
- Identify actions that can be taken to meet space creation needs.

This work will be an important resource and advocacy tool to help communities in the region. The information gathered will be shared with MCFD and can also help local governments and their partners advocate and justify future space creation investments through the Child Care BC New Spaces Fund, and the Community Child Care Space Creation Program, which both have up to \$1 million available in future project funding.

The collection of this information is intended to help local governments, the child care community, as well as provincial decision-makers better understand the child care needs regionally and in their community, and make informed decisions on future child care planning.

Discussion:

The [Care for Our Kids Final Report](#) highlights the project findings after engaging with over 630 parents, caregivers, child care providers, and other stakeholders through two online surveys, nineteen one-on-one interviews, four focus groups, multiple drop-ins to parent programs, and two action planning workshops. This study also catalogued a total of 5,752 child care spaces across the region (including both licensed child care and spaces where licensing is not required).

Highlights of findings from the report include:

- In a 2017 study completed by the MCFD, performance indicators show that the Central Okanagan is an area with “significant difficulty in finding care” for infants/toddlers (0-36 months), and “general difficulty to find care” for ages 3-5 years, with current survey data and engagement feedback supporting those findings. Another need currently not being met identified in the provider survey was care for school-aged children.
- 49 per cent of survey respondents across the Central Okanagan indicated that they had been on two to five waitlists prior to accessing care, and it was found that it takes between one month and two years for families to find care in the region.
- As a result of the lack of availability in spaces, parents are looking for care alternatives, with 34 per cent of survey respondents indicating that they use a family member or friend for care.
- Parents and caregivers are also looking for greater flexibility in the child care they receive, with 37 per cent stating that if given the choice, they’d chose an alternate care arrangement that provided more flexibility, was more affordable and was licensed.
- Other layered complexities considered in this report are the challenges and impacts on child care providers, children, parents, and underserved populations.
- Engagement with child care providers emphasized the complexity of the child care system in the Central Okanagan and the many barriers and factors faced to address child care needs.
 - The largest issue facing child care providers is the shortage of Early Childhood Educators (ECE’s) available to provide care; 83 per cent of respondents in the provider survey indicated that staff leave the sector to go to another profession.
 - In relation to opening new spaces, difficulties were noted in finding appropriate, affordable locations, and navigating licensing and municipal processes.
- In order to improve access to licensed care spaces across BC, the MCFD has provided target access rates across two age ranges.

- For children aged 0-5, the target access rate is 30 per cent. Kelowna's current access rate is 28.1 per cent, meaning an average of 30 new spaces created per year over the next 10 years are needed in order to meet the MCFD's target.
- For children aged 6-12, the target access rate is 80 per cent. Kelowna's current access rate is 20 per cent, meaning an average of 1103 new spaces created per year over the next 10 years would be needed in order to meet the MCFD's target.
- The recommendations set out in this report are grounded in the province's goal to move towards Universal Child Care – which encourages a move towards Licensed child care that offers inclusive and culturally appropriate programming, and programming for children with diverse needs.

As we look to increase the number of child care spaces within the Central Okanagan over the next ten years, systemic child care challenges must be considered; a multi-dimensional, community approach is required to improve child care in the region and to create transformational change.

Five main areas for action planning were identified:

- Process – streamline or simplify municipal and other regulatory processes
- Policy – develop or refine local government plans and policies with child care in mind
- Partnerships – leverage partnerships to access funding to 'unlock' underutilized assets or develop new ones
- Advocacy – advocate to higher levels of government for enhanced local funding and support
- Education & Training – reduce the knowledge gap for parents trying to access care and providers looking to startup or expand

With each recommendation, this plan has outlined actions, roles, timelines, outcomes and measures of success to help move the region towards a more sustainable child care offering. These action planning steps address gaps which were identified throughout the region in varying degrees. Some actions may be more applicable to other local municipalities, depending on the existing structure of local government organization. Each municipality will have to analyze and prioritize the actions based on local resources and need.

There are some actions that the City of Kelowna is already taking to address this issue. The Permissive Tax Exemption Bylaw 11936 includes a section for Social Services such as non-profit child care societies and child development associations. Properties that are eligible for this tax exemption must have the public as the primary beneficiary and therefore must be accessible to the public. The Kelowna Zoning Bylaw permits child care as either principal or secondary uses in numerous zones including residential, commercial, agricultural, industrial and public zones. A text amendment is currently underway to reduce the parking requirements to help facilitate more child care centres in residential neighbourhoods. As well, child care is being considered in the updated draft policies of the Official Community Plan 2040, which will be brought to Council at a future date and will include updated language regarding prioritizing child care.

Conclusion:

This work will be an important resource and advocacy tool to support regional efforts. The data provided will assist local governments and community partners with tangible information to inform future planning at a local, regional and provincial level.

Utilizing this data will display stronger context of the child care needs in the region if municipalities decide to apply to the Ministry of Children and Family Development's Community Child Care Space Creation Program. This program was established to assist local governments in creating new licensed child care spaces, either within their own facilities or in a facility under a long-term lease agreement by the government. Another funding program, called the Child Care BC New Spaces Fund would allow for community organizations to apply for funding for new licensed child care spaces. This report will be able to serve community organizations and highlight the needs across the Central Okanagan in order to strengthen applications for funding.

The City will continue to support the sector and child care space creation through its involvement with the Child Care Council of Central Okanagan and our regional partners regarding this data and subsequent recommendations.

The Care for Our Kids Final Report with endorsement from all participating municipalities is due to UBCM and MCFD by July 31st in order to fulfill the City's requirements for the Community Child Care Planning & Needs Assessment. The City's regional partners, Lake Country, Peachland and West Kelowna, have all endorsed the final report at this time.

Internal Circulation:

Active Living & Culture Division
Communications Department
Policy & Planning Department
Development Planning Department

Considerations applicable to this report:

Financial/Budgetary Considerations: The submission of the final report to the province will allow us to receive the final 25 per cent of funding from UBCM and complete the project.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Existing Policy:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Communications Comments:

Submitted by: M. Siggers, Community & Neighbourhood Services Manager

Approved for inclusion:

JG

Attachments: 2020-07-13 Presentation Child Care Needs Assessment

cc: