

# Licensed childcare centres seeking Regina property tax exemption <sup>[1]</sup>

Twenty-one licensed daycares will present their case for a property tax exemption to Regina city council in the new year.

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**Source:** Regina Leader-Post

**Format:** Article

**Publication Date:** 1 Nov 2017

## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

Twenty-one licensed daycares will present their case for a property tax exemption to Regina city council in the new year.

"Regina is one of the very few major centres in Canada that taxes its daycares commercially," said Colleen Schmidt, a board member for the Cathedral Area Co-operative Daycare.

Last January, five daycares operating in converted homes saw their property taxes doubled after a reassessment. They were newly classified as commercial, where previously they were residential.

Many of the city's other daycare centres were already paying commercial taxes, while others operating in schools were not taxed at all.

Now the licensed daycare community is asking for a tax exemption across the board. Regina had 67 licensed daycares in October, according to the provincial government website.

Schmidt expects to present to city council in February.

"Provincial legislation in Saskatchewan does not indicate property owned and operated by daycares is exempt from property tax," said Deborah Bryden, director of the city's assessment and taxation department.

Schmidt believes it should be, for a few reasons.

Not only are licensed daycares non-profit organizations, but they provide an essential service, said Schmidt.

"Without daycare, people don't go to work and that's what makes us stand out from other non-profit organizations," said Schmidt. "The tax exemption is a tool city council can use to stimulate growth in a strategic area."

She points to Design Regina, the Official Community Plan, which calls for more daycare centres, as well as access to employment and reducing poverty.

"We're distant last in Canada" for daycare availability, said Schmidt, according to a 2015 report by the Childcare Resource and Research Unit.

Second-last Alberta has daycare space available for 20 per cent of children who need it.

According to Statistics Canada data from 2016, there were 30,322 children in Regina aged 12 and under who required non-parental childcare.

As of September 2017, there were 3,589 daycare spaces, or availability for 11.75 per cent of children.

"The real crux of this issue is for every citizen to ask, 'What do you want your city to look like in the future?'" said Schmidt.

"Do you want it to be a place that's encouraging and inviting for young families and supports opportunity and a future and gives our kids the best shot in life ... or do we want to be last in Canada?"

Childcare fees have gone up at Schmidt's daycare to help pay property taxes that total more than \$7,400 in 2017.

Daycares are tax-exempt in Alberta, Manitoba and New Brunswick. Ontario and B.C. have a special tax category for childcare centres, which taxes them at roughly a residential rate.

The 21 centres requesting the exemption are paying \$209,522.30 in municipal property taxes in 2017 - a "drop in the bucket" in the city's \$437-million operating budget, said Schmidt.

In addition to requesting a property tax exemption, the 21 daycares are asking council to join with other municipalities to lobby the provincial government for a full property tax exemption.

The province collects education property tax, which totals \$81,713.70 for these 21 daycares.

Schmidt realizes it's not an ideal time to ask for a tax exemption, given the city's \$10-million budget shortfall.

"Believe me, in daycare we understand what it means to be pressed for cash because we're always broke too, but if not now, when?" said Schmidt. "We've just got to make it a priority."

She encourages people to reach out to their city councillors, expressing the desire to make daycare more affordable and accessible, which she says a property tax exemption can do.

"Really, city council is there to build the city that residents want for themselves and residents want for their children, so it's important that people speak up and talk to their city councillor about this issue," said Schmidt.

**The daycares involved in the property tax exemption request are:**

- Bo-Peep Co-operative Day Care
- Cathedral Area Co-operative Day Care
- Child Care Centre Co-operative
- Circle Project Infant Centre
- Circle Project Child Centre
- Ducky Day Care Co-operative
- First Years Learning Centre
- Gardiner Park Child Care Association
- Glencairn Child Care Co-operative
- Hope's Home Inc.
- Little Memories Child Care Co-operative
- Prairie Lily Early Learning Corp
- Regina Eastview Daycare Inc.
- Rink Avenue Day Care Co-operative
- Sandcastles Childcare Inc. (Albert and Coventry locations)
- Stepping Stones (Elphinstone, Robinson and Broad Street locations)
- Solid Futures Learning Centre Co-operative
- Whitmore Park Child Care Co-operative

-reprinted from Regina Leader-Post

**Region:** Saskatchewan <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** non-profit <sup>[4]</sup>

accessibility <sup>[5]</sup>

social policy <sup>[6]</sup>

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**Source URL (modified on 19 Jul 2020):** <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/17/11/licensed-childcare-centres-seeking-regina-property-tax-exemption>

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